

**ADDENDUM TO *DELTA VISION, DELTA VOICES***  
**JANUARY, 2001**

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Remarks of the President at Delta Conference

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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May 10, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUILDING PROSPERITY

IN THE DELTA

Crystal Gateway Marriott

Arlington, Virginia

12:20 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. Good afternoon, and welcome. Thank you for coming here to meet. I know that we're having a reception over at the White House later this evening; I hope all of you will come and I look forward to seeing you all there, as well.

I want to begin by thanking Conn Davis for his introduction. He's an impressive young man. (Applause.) In addition to going to Boys Nation, you might be interested to know that he's a football standout, and Eagle Scout, and from my point of view, most important, he plays trombone in his school's jazz band. (Applause.)

I also want to thank all the members of our administration who have been part of this. And I can't mention them all, but I especially should note, of course, Secretary Slater is from the Delta, from Lee County in Arkansas; Bill Ferris, the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, from Mississippi; our FCC Chairman, Bill Kennard; our Office of Personnel Management Director Janice Lachance is here. I thank all of them and the others who are helping me with the Delta, as well as all the people on the White House staff who have worked so hard on this -- Lynn Cutler, Lisa Kountoupes, and many others.

Governor Musgrove, we're glad to see you here. Thank you for coming, sir. And we appreciate your leadership, and we're glad to see you down there. (Applause.) I thank Mayor Herenton from Memphis. You know, when I was a boy, we used to go over to the Delta, and everybody who lived east of Little Rock would say they were not from Arkansas, they lived in the state of

Delta, and Memphis was its capital. So I'm glad to see you here, sir. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

I want to thank my Arkansas Congressman from the Delta, Marion Berry. I think he's still here. And if any of you had any idea how many hours he and Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln have spent literally haranguing me about the entire Delta, not just Arkansas, you would all supplement their salaries generously. They have been wonderful. I want to thank Marion Berry and Blanche Lincoln for what they have done. (Applause.)

Lt. Governor Wood, we're glad to have you here. My old friend, Jess White, we've been working on these issues for more than 15 years together. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to a former Delta Congressman, Mike Espy, who's here, I think plainly one of the two or three best Agriculture Secretaries this country has ever had. And I really thank you very much for being here. (Applause.)

I won't go into this in great detail today, but I'm going to have in the next few months some further proposals on agriculture, which I think are important. We should not forget the agriculture component of the Delta's future, and the fact that as I warned when it passed, the last farm bill we passed basically is bad for family farmers except when prices are high. When prices are high, everybody's getting along all right. We need to do better in the next farm bill and with agricultural policy to recognize the unique characteristics of the family farm structure that, thank goodness, is still alive in most of the Delta, and we need to do what we can to preserve it.

So I thank you, Mike Espy. And all the farmers that are here, I thank you, and I hope that we will remember that. (Applause.)

Finally, just by way of introduction, I would like to say a special word of appreciation to all of the business leaders who are here, large and small. And if I might, I'd like to say one special word of appreciation to Wayne Leonard and the folks at Energy -- they have been really devoted to this whole idea of our New Market strategy and rebuilding the Delta. And I've had -- I don't know how many people who have told me in the last couple of months that they've had meetings with Wayne or various Energy executives who have said, well, here's what our company's into; now, let's get past that and let me talk to you about what I really want to talk to you about, which is rebuilding the Delta.

So, for all of you in the private sector that have that kind of commitment -- obviously, most of this will be done with and through you, and I thank you all very, very much. (Applause.)

Those of you whom I have had the privilege to know in Arkansas over the last several decades, some of you all my life -- there's my state senator out there, Bud Canada; thank you for being here -- and those of you with whom I worked on the Delta Development Commission, or on the Southern Growth Policies Board, know that this is more than a political issue to me, even more than a public policy problem. I've been interested in the people and the problems and the promise of the Delta for 40 years.

You know, I loved music when I was a child. I was 15 years old when I first went to New Orleans; I still remember everything I did. The first place I ever went where hamburgers cost more than a dollar -- I was horrified. (Laughter.) I still remember going to Preservation Hall and sitting there as a 15-year-old boy for four or five hours, listening to these old guys play music that I would kill to be able to play like. I still remember everything about it. I still remember how the Delta looked and the bends in the river.

And I still remember when I was in college -- I used to take several days off when I was in college, either during Christmas or summer vacation, just to drive over to the Delta and wander around. Just me, alone. I'd get up on the levee and ride up and down, and go into these little old towns along the Delta and talk to people, just trying to get a sense of the pulse of the place.

And I still remember some of the things that weren't very good, too. I remember the -- it was in the Delta that I last saw segregated restrooms marked out. And I remember when we made our campaign comeback in 1982, and I ran for governor with the help of Rodney Slater and my friend, Carroll Willis, who may be here today, two sons of the Delta. We told the people of the Delta we were never coming to a segregated meeting in the Mississippi Delta again and we were going to have to -- it was about more than an election, we were going to turn this region around and we were going to have to do it together. And a lot of people thought I was nuts. And within 30 days, everybody thought I was a genius.

And we've all been working together over there ever since, with some ups and downs and twists and turns. But I think that I have been privileged to be a part of the last 20 years of the history of the Delta. And I loved the opportunity I had to do this Delta commission, because I got to learn a lot about Southern Illinois, for example, which is south of Richmond. A lot of people don't know that. I learned a lot about western Kentucky and southeastern Missouri, where Conn is from, and places that I otherwise might never have been able to become acquainted with.

And I guess, more than anything else, what I want to say is that the pledge we made a decade ago when we issued the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission report is still what we ought to be working on, to make the people of the Delta full partners in America's future. That's why we're here today. The report that I have just been given is, in a way, a rededication to our continuing mission.

I guess what I want you to know more than anything else is we're making progress and we now know more than we did when we started about how to do better much more quickly. I want you to know that the federal government will do our part, and I will personally work on these issues until the day I leave office, and then after I do, for the rest of my life. This is a big personal issue with me, as I know it is with the Vice President and all of our people in our administration who come from this region.

Now, I want to begin with special thanks on the substance of this to Secretary Slater. We got 24 agencies together to help Secretary Slater run our federal task force on the Delta. And we've put together the report that he has just given me. It's given us a chance to look back a decade and to look forward to the challenges and opportunities of the decade ahead.

Since 1990, a great deal has been done. You know that in the nation we have the longest economic expansion in history and the lowest unemployment rate since January of 1970, over 21 million new jobs. But the policies we put in place I think had a special impact in the Delta, especially the expansion of the earned income tax credit and the efforts we've made that you heard Conn talk about, to bring computers and access to the Internet to our schools and other public facilities throughout the Delta.

Conn's example is pretty instructive. In 1995, his school district in East Prairie had 24 computers; we helped them get 350 more at a 70 percent discount. Now, thanks to the e-rate program that the FCC promulgated, that Vice President Gore did so much to fight for, there's a \$2-billion subsidy that goes out to the poorest school districts across America every year, which enables people to make the most of these computers.

In 1994, when we started this program -- I'm sure the Vice President went over this -- but we had only 3 percent of our classrooms and 16 percent of our schools connected; this year percent of our schools connected. This year, we have over 95 percent of our schools, including 90 percent of the poorest schools in America, connected to the Internet, and almost three-quarters of our classrooms. And this will make a big difference, both educationally and economically, in the Delta in the years ahead.

Over the last seven years, we've had over \$2 billion in transportation improvements -- from ports to highways to airports; over \$6 billion in job training, welfare-to-work, and youth opportunity initiatives; and again, \$250 million just to connect the schools that were poor in the Delta to the Internet. More than \$10 million in direct investment in the enterprise zones and the empowerment communities, a program, again, which the Vice President has led, which has leveraged 10 times that much from private resources.

I have done what I could to do this in a bipartisan, or even a nonpartisan, manner. And I know Rodney said the Speaker of the House was coming to the White House tonight, to the reception. If he is there, I want every one of you to go up and shake his hand and thank him for working with me to pass the New Markets legislation in Congress. I'll say more about that in a minute, but I think that is the biggest single thing we could do to help the Delta economy in a quick way. And I will say more about it, but I want you to thank him for that. (Applause.)

Just the tours we have taken in the Delta have already led to more resources in places like Hermitage, Arkansas, at the tomato co-operative, and Clarksdale, Mississippi. And the Private Sector Enterprise Corporation of the Delta has created more than 5,200 jobs and helped support more than 600 local businesses.

Since the 1990 Delta report, more than 10,000 Delta residents got phone service for the first time. It's hard to talk about the Internet if you don't have a telephone line. Unless you get too discouraged, let me tell you what a big problem this still is in other places, in physically remote areas. I was at the Navajo Reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico, which is in northern New Mexico, near the Colorado and Utah borders, where the unemployment rate is 58 percent, and

the percentage of people without telephones is 70 percent. I was introduced by a young woman like Conn -- a little younger than you -- a brilliant young girl, a Native American girl, who won a contest and got a beautiful computer. And she couldn't log on to the Internet because she had to take the computer home to a home without a telephone line.

So this is a big deal, the fact that 10,000 more Delta residents have gotten telephone service. The Delta unemployment has gone from 7.5 percent when I took office to 5.1 percent in February. In Mississippi, the Delta counties have created jobs at a rate 13 times greater than the national average, which is saying something.

But unemployment is still above the national average; wages and home ownership are still below the national average; poverty and infant mortality have gone down, but are still too high. And we know that the statistics don't tell the whole story. There are still towns without proper sewage systems, and children sick from pollution and malnutrition. There are still millions of Americans seeking to live their dreams without a way to do it in the Delta.

I'm here because it's a big personal issue with me, but I also am here as President because it's in our national interest to do something about this. I've said this over and over again, but I want you to remember this. One of the most significant debates we have here in Washington -- and one of the things, by the way, that as American citizens you'll be called upon to decide in the coming election -- is how we can continue this overall economic expansion. All of us have been there when times got bad in America, and when times got bad in America, they were always worse in the Delta. When the country got hit hard, we always got hit harder.

When I served as governor during the decade of the '80s, until the year I ran for President there was only one month -- one month -- in the last 10 years I was governor when our unemployment rate was at or below the national average. So we know when times are bad we suffer more.

On the other hand, when times are good -- you've followed this in the press, there is a big debate now. Unemployment is at 3.9 percent. Is inflation just around the corner? Should the Federal Reserve raise interest rates more? If they raise interest rates more will it cramp credit so much that it will kill the expansion? How long can this thing go on? Is this just going to be like a laboratory animal that sooner or later just runs out of steam and keels over?

Well, we had these academic debates up here, and right underneath our noses in the Mississippi Delta, in Appalachia, in the inner cities, on the Indian reservations, there are people who could start jobs, start businesses, grow the economy with no inflation whatever. If people are unemployed or under-employed, and there are new opportunities out there, and you create new workers, new employers, new taxpayers and new consumers at the same time, there is no inflation in that growth.

So every person in America ought to be interested in the Mississippi Delta. If you're making money on Wall Street today, and you'd like to keep on making it, and you're worried that either high interest rates or a coming recession would hurt you, you should want the Delta to do well.

If you're worried about where you're going to sell your next products in Silicon Valley, you should want the Delta to do well.

This is a huge issue for the nation, because no one knows how to do this. And as I say, that will be a big debate in the elections – are we now so prosperous we ought to go back and try what we did in 1981 and later, and have a great, big tax cut and hope it works? Or should we have a smaller tax cut and keep paying the debt down, and invest in our people? You know what I prefer, but I think that it's important to understand, we're going to have this debate in the context of, number one, what should we do with our prosperity; and number two, how do we keep this economy going? And it's already the longest economic expansion in history.

And right there, before the eyes of every American who knows anything about this, is the Delta, and every other underdeveloped area in our country. And I'm telling you, there are billions upon billions upon billions of economic growth potential that are totally non-inflationary -- because of the problems we've had in the past, it is America's promise for the future, not just yours, that we ought to be developing here. (Applause.)

Now, on the other hand, we know that it won't happen by accident. We have to create networks and opportunities and incentives to get this done. I have asked Congress, as Secretary Slater said, to create a Delta Regional Authority with \$30 million to invest in the region's economic future. I've asked for another \$129 million in targeted assistance for the region. And I thank my Senator, Blanche Lambert Lincoln, and Congressman Marion Berry. They sponsored the regional authority bill in Congress. I thank Senator Bill Frist for his strong bipartisan support. We've got a number of bipartisan cosponsors from across the Delta and I hope we can bring this authority to life.

And while you're here today I hope you will ask Senator Cochran and Senator Lott, particularly, to give this thing a shove, because I think they could sort of shove it out there, if they wanted to and we need them. (Applause.)

I'm sure Jess White has already talked about this, but the Appalachian Regional Commission proves that these things do make a difference. They make a difference because they institutionalize concentration on a specific area and its opportunities. And it makes a difference when you've got somebody who is paid to get up every day and think about you and what you can do in an organized, focused way.

We also want to announce today new support for the Delta in three broad areas: attracting new business and economic development, investing in basic infrastructure and building strong communities.

I know this morning the Vice President presented our new package of \$20 million in Delta economic development initiatives, loans and grants for small businesses, training, community technology centers, community financial institutions and tourism. That's an important issue.

Let me emphasize one part of that -- the community technology centers. The congressional majority took that out of my budget and I'm going to try to get it back in. But let me tell you why it counts. The computers are great for Conn. And in the districts where they can take the computers home and the parents can learn to e-mail the teachers, learn to use it, that's great. But most places in the Delta, we have a lot of adults who could benefit from what they could learn just by learning how to use the computers, and learning what resources are available to them on the Internet. That's what these community computer centers are all about. They are designed to set up a thousand more of them and to support the few that are out there now -- there's the network out there now in the country -- so that all the adults in the low-income places in America can go in and learn to use the Internet for their own benefit, both because they developed computer skills and to get the information off of it.

Now, this is a big deal. I'll just give you two examples of the potential, because I want all of you to start thinking about this, and I want you to help me get these community computer centers. I'll just give you two examples. One is an American example, e-bay. E-bay is a site on the web where you can trade things -- you get on, you find out somebody's got something to sell, and you can buy it. If you've got something that you want to sell, somebody else can buy it. There are now 30,000 people making a living on e-bay -- not working for the company, making a living trading on e-bay -- and a significant percentage of them are former welfare recipients. (Applause.)

Now, that's an amazing thing. Why? This is a big deal. What does the Internet do that's different, that's important for the Delta? It collapses time and space. The physical isolation that you feel. Conn talks about all the wonders of small-town life, which I share, but being physically isolated. The Internet can collapse time and space. It can bring any subject to his school. It can bring any piece of information in the Library of Congress. The whole Encyclopedia Britannica's on the Net now. And the same thing is true for the economy. So that's one example.

Second example: I was in India, recently, as you may remember. I went to one of the poorer states in India, Rajasthan, to a little village where the village women met me and showed me their dairy cooperative, and showed me their -- and the local government people showed me how they were governing. And then they took me to the town's public building -- which was an old building, but inside the public building was a brand-spanking new computer. And this lady came in with a newborn baby, and she wanted to learn how she could best take care of her child. And there was someone there to assist her, and the program was done in English and Hindi -- modified in other languages when they need them, in other parts of the country. And this lady -- every piece of information on the federal and state government that they had already was on the Net. Everything; it was on their website there.

So she calls up the Health Department website and punches the -- she clicks the mouse for Early Childhood Care, and a couple of pages come up with great visuals, so that if you're virtually illiterate you can still figure out what it says. She punches the printer. She gets this unbelievable information, spits right out. And this woman, in a country with a per capita income of \$450,



takes home with her newborn information just as good as you could get from the best suburban medical center in this area.

Now, this is why we need the community computer centers. And I hope you will help me get them all over the Delta. (Applause.) And I thank the Vice President for the work he's done on that.

We also have some basic infrastructure needs. There are still communities in the Delta that don't have safe drinking water, that don't have adequate sewage systems, that basically have -- their basic public health infrastructure is inadequate to support any new industrial investment of any size.

I remember when I first went to the Delta, running for governor in '78. I'd go in these little old towns, and there was sewage open in the streets. And we -- I gave every penny of federal money I could beg, borrow or steal, to little places that didn't have any political clout, because there was 150 people here and 250 there -- to clean it up, and it changed the lives of a lot of these communities. A lot of those places are doing much better 20 years later, just because we gave them basic infrastructure.

So, today, we're going to give \$30 million more to 19 communities like that to improve the water supply. This is going to be a big issue for the whole world for the next 50 years, you mark my words. Clean water and adequate sewage -- things that most of us take for granted -- huge issue around the world.

Most people believe that AIDS is the biggest public health problem in the world. It is in Africa -- 70 percent of the cases are there. Malaria and TB, they're the big problems. But we still have more children every day die in poor places in the world because of dysentery and other problems -- diarrhea -- directly related to dehydration because they don't have safe water.

So we shouldn't forget. So I'm making this commitment today to \$30 million more as a symbolic one, but I ask you to continue to support these initiatives as well. (Applause.)

This is about more than bricks and mortar. We also have to make communities strong and healthy. We also want to do more on safety. You know, I said this a couple of days ago when we got the last crime report, with crime now down eight years in a row -- we know we can lower the crime rate, but no one believes we're as safe as we ought to be. And I'm trying to put another 50,000 police officers out there. Today, we're going to put some more in Helena and Greenwood, Louisiana, and I hope you will continue to support that.

We're also supporting environmental education and environmentally-sound farming; helping more Delta residents to buy and build their own homes; and funding a new public-private partnership to provide regional planning support that much of the Delta has never had.

And let me just say this about the housing issue. Again, we now know things we didn't know 15 years ago. A couple of years ago I went out to California, to the Inland Empire, which is east of

L.A. -- it's the industrial area east of L.A., San Bernardino area. And on the rail line that runs out of L.A. I met with HUD and the Energy Department and the home builders at this joint effort to build a low-income housing project for low-income working people. And the deal they made these folks was, if you'll live here, even if you have to go to Los Angeles to work, we pledge to you that we will build you a home where your power bills will be 40 percent lower, at least, than they would be in a home of this size anywhere else in California.

And what did they do? They had the basic insulation. They used these new windows that cost a little more money, but they keep out a lot more heat and cold and they let in a lot more light. And they used light bulbs that cost about twice as much, but they last three or four times as long and, therefore, they're energy efficient. And they had solar panels that looked just like ordinary tar shingles you put on a roof -- you can't tell the difference, except they're slightly wider now. And I can report to you that after a couple of years those working people -- a lot of these people were working for \$25,000 a year -- their average fuel bills are 65 percent below the state average for the same square footage in California.

Now, we could build housing like that all over the Delta. It would put people to work building the houses. It would -- you would probably get the financing worked out for some of the energy conservation stuff, working with the utilities. It would enable them to manage their power load better -- and it's like a huge tax cut. Can you imagine what it would be like if your power bill was two-thirds lower every month? So there are real opportunities here I think you ought to look at for economic development and improving the quality of life.

Now, we want to do more, but I need your help on three things that we're trying to do here. First, the New Markets Initiative. We're working with the Democrats and the Republicans in the Congress -- and the Speaker has taken a big personal interest in this, because he's from rural Illinois -- and we're trying to take the ideas that some of the Republican House members have who are interested in this, and ours, and put it together. But when we get all finished, whatever it's called and whatever it looks like, the bottom line is, here's what we're trying to do: We're trying to give people with money in America the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America that they can get today, in terms of tax credits, loan guarantees and other incentives to invest in poor areas in Latin America, or Africa, or Asia, or anywhere else. I think it's a very important thing. (Applause.)

And again, I favor the foreign investment incentives. You know, we just passed through the House, and I think we're going to pass today or tomorrow in the Senate, the Africa-Caribbean Basin Initiative. I want to be a good neighbor; I like this. But we ought to understand that our biggest markets are those that are right here before us. So I need your help in that.

The second thing is, I want you to help us pass this Delta Commission legislation. I want you to talk to all the senators and all the representatives from all the states from the Delta. This is a totally nonpolitical deal; I don't know whose name goes on it, I don't care what happens. I just want to know that when we're not here anymore and our stewardship is over, that there is an institutional focus where somebody gets up every day and thinks about this region. And I want you to help us pass it. (Applause.)

Last thing I want you to help us do is to pass our educational initiatives that are necessary to turn around these schools. And I want to close with this because it's really important. You know as well as I do -- if you want more outside investments, you want people to come in, you've got to be able to prove you've got good schools. If you're educating people to have good skills and that people who come in from the outside, their kids will be in good schools.

So I'm going to close with this story. I just got back from one of my education tours. And I was in Owensboro, Kentucky, which is in western Kentucky, therefore, it's in our region. So -- is somebody from over there? (Applause.) So I'll tell you this story. Now, in 1989 before I became President, I worked with President Bush and the Bush administration to define these national education goals. And then in 1993, we passed this program called Goals 2000 to help states and school districts meet the goals.

Then, we realized that we needed to do more, so we said -- we passed through the Congress in the next couple of years, legislation that all the states had to have standard, and they had to identify schools that were low-performing, and come up with strategies to turn them around. Now I'm trying to pass legislation that goes further. But let's just focus on that. And what I tried to do is to say that we ought to give states funds to help these low-performing schools work to train the teachers better, to support the principals. We also ought to end the practice of social promotion, but not call kids failures when the system fails them. So we ought to give every school district that needs it after-school, summer school programs, and all of that. And we've been working on that.

Now, here's my Exhibit A for the Delta: Western Kentucky, Owensboro. First looking -- in 1996, Kentucky said, okay, we're going to identify all our failing schools, and here they are, 170 of them. Within two years of just being identified and supported and focused on, 91 percent of those schools were off the list. Now -- (applause) -- it gets better. So here's Owensboro, Exhibit A, two-thirds of the kids in Owensboro are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Not your rich, suburban school, right? Two-thirds of the kids. Now, in four years since they were identified, and this school -- this elementary school I was in -- as a school that was low-performing, here's what has happened.

Four years ago there were 12 percent of the kids reading at or above grade level; today, 57 percent are. Four years ago there were 5 percent doing math at or above grade level; today, 70 percent are. Four years ago there were zero kids in this school doing science at or above grade level; today 64 percent are. This school is now the 18th best grade school in Kentucky, even though two-thirds of the kids are at or below -- are eligible for school lunches. Two-thirds.

Now, here's the other thing. In Kentucky, 10 of the 20 highest performing grade schools -- 10 of the 20 -- have half or more of the kids eligible for free or reduced lunches. Race, economics and location are not destiny if you've got a good education system and you give these kids a chance to learn. (Applause.)

So, again, I say, I need your help. Ask the Congress to help us with the New Markets. Ask the Congress to help us with the Delta Commission. Ask the Congress to give enough money to give every school in the country that's not performing well a chance to give their kids summer school and after-school programs, teacher training programs, the things necessary to make these schools work.

I'd give anything if when I had been governor we knew as much about what to do in the schools, in the economy, as we now know. And that's the last point I want to make. When I took office here, even a lot of people that helped me in '92 were not really sure that anything could get better. And if I had told you in 1992, I want you to vote for me and I'll get rid of this \$300-billion a year deficit, and, oh, by the way, we'll be running surpluses three years in a row, and when I leave office we'll pay off \$350 billion of the national debt -- you would have said, you know, he seems like a nice young fellow, but he's slightly deranged, we better send him home. (Laughter.)

So we know now, so we don't have an excuse. We know we can make the economy better. We know that we can have schools that are very poor perform at a very high level. We know we can lower the crime rate. We know we can grow the economy and improve the environment. We know we can cut the welfare rolls in half and still support low-income people who are working and trying to do right by their kids, if you give them the right child care and transportation and other support they need. It's not like we don't know we can do better now.

And I would argue that when you know you can do better, when you're not just living on hope, but you've got evidence, you have a heavier responsibility. So I'm glad you're here. I want you to tell us more of what we can do. I want you to give me every chance you can to do everything I can while I'm in office. I want you to help me pass this legislation.

But when you leave here, more than anything else, I want you to believe we can do this. We can do this. This is not a wing and a prayer; this is not hope; this is not -- this is evidence. We can do it. It's just a question of whether we're prepared to pay the price of time and effort and organization and passion.

Everybody loves the Delta. It's about time we all did something about it.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

12:55 P.M. EDT

## **TEXT OF THE LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY**

**EXCERPT FROM CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4577, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001 -- (House of Representatives - December 15, 2000)**

### **SEC. 503. DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY.**

The Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1921 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

``Subtitle F--Delta Regional Authority

#### **``SEC. 382A. DEFINITIONS.**

``In this subtitle:

``(1) **AUTHORITY.**--The term `Authority' means the Delta Regional Authority established by section 382B.

``(2) **REGION.**--The term `region' means the Lower Mississippi (as defined in section 4 of the Delta Development Act (42 U.S.C. 3121 note; Public Law 100-460)).

``(3) **FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM.**--The term `Federal grant program' means a Federal grant program to provide assistance in--

``(A) acquiring or developing land;

``(B) constructing or equipping a highway, road, bridge, or facility; or

``(C) carrying out other economic development activities.

#### **``SEC. 382B. DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY.**

``(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**--

``(1) **IN GENERAL.**--There is established the Delta Regional Authority.

``(2) **COMPOSITION.**--The Authority shall be composed of--

``(A) a Federal member, to be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate; and

``(B) the Governor (or a designee of the Governor) of each State in the region that elects to participate in the Authority.

``(3) **COCHAIRPERSONS.**--The Authority shall be headed by--

``(A) the Federal member, who shall serve--

``(i) as the Federal cochairperson; and

``(ii) as a liaison between the Federal Government and the Authority; and

``(B) a State cochairperson, who--

``(i) shall be a Governor of a participating State in the region; and

``(ii) shall be elected by the State members for a term of not less than 1 year.

``(b) **ALTERNATE MEMBERS.**--

``(1) **STATE ALTERNATES.**--The State member of a participating State may have a single alternate, who shall be--

``(A) a resident of that State; and

“(B) appointed by the Governor of the State.

“(2) **ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.**--The President shall appoint an alternate Federal cochairperson.

“(3) **QUORUM.**--A State alternate shall not be counted toward the establishment of a quorum of the Authority in any instance in which a quorum of the State members is required to be present.

“(4) **DELEGATION OF POWER.**--No power or responsibility of the Authority specified in paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (c), and no voting right of any Authority member, shall be delegated to any person--

“(A) who is not a Authority member; or

“(B) who is not entitled to vote in Authority meetings.

“(c) **VOTING.**--

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**--A decision by the Authority shall require a majority vote of the Authority (not including any member representing a State that is delinquent under subsection (g)(2)(C)) to be effective.

“(2) **QUORUM.**--A quorum of State members shall be required to be present for the Authority to make any policy decision, including--

“(A) a modification or revision of a Authority policy decision;

“(B) approval of a State or regional development plan; and

“(C) any allocation of funds among the States.

“(3) **PROJECT AND GRANT PROPOSALS.**--The approval of project and grant proposals shall be--

“(A) a responsibility of the Authority; and

“(B) conducted in accordance with section 382I.

“(4) **VOTING BY ALTERNATE MEMBERS.**--An alternate member shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Federal or State representative for which the alternate member is an alternate.

“(d) **DUTIES.**--The Authority shall--

“(1) develop, on a continuing basis, comprehensive and coordinated plans and programs to establish priorities and approve grants for the economic development of the region, giving due consideration to other Federal, State, and local planning and development activities in the region;

“(2) not later than 220 days after the date of enactment of this subtitle, establish priorities in a development plan for the region (including 5-year regional outcome targets);

“(3) assess the needs and assets of the region based on available research, demonstrations, investigations, assessments, and evaluations of the region prepared by Federal, State, and local agencies, universities, local development districts, and other nonprofit groups;

“(4) formulate and recommend to the Governors and legislatures of States that participate in the Authority forms of interstate cooperation;

“(5) work with State and local agencies in developing appropriate model legislation;

“(6)(A) enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts in the region; or

“(B) if no local development district exists in an area in a participating State in the region, foster the creation of a local development district;

“(7) encourage private investment in industrial, commercial, and other economic development projects in the region; and

“(8) cooperate with and assist State governments with economic development programs of participating States.

“(e) **ADMINISTRATION.**--In carrying out subsection (d), the Authority may--

“(1) hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, receive such evidence, and print or otherwise reproduce and distribute a description of the proceedings and reports on actions by the Authority as the Authority considers appropriate;

“(2) authorize, through the Federal or State co-chairperson or any other member of the Authority designated by the Authority, the administration of oaths if the Authority determines that testimony should be taken or evidence received under oath; and

“(3) request from any Federal, State, or local department or agency such information as may be available to or procurable by the department or agency that may be of use to the Authority in carrying out duties of the Authority;

“(4) adopt, amend, and repeal bylaws and rules governing the conduct of Authority business and the performance of Authority duties;

“(5) request the head of any Federal department or agency to detail to the Authority such personnel as the Authority requires to carry out duties of the Authority, each such detail to be without loss of seniority, pay, or other employee status;

“(6) request the head of any State department or agency or local government to detail to the Authority such personnel as the Authority requires to carry out duties of the Authority, each such detail to be without loss of seniority, pay, or other employee status;

“(7) provide for coverage of Authority employees in a suitable retirement and employee benefit system by--

“(A) making arrangements or entering into contracts with any participating State government; or

“(B) otherwise providing retirement and other employee benefit coverage;

“(8) accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations of services or real, personal, tangible, or intangible property;

“(9) enter into and perform such contracts, leases, cooperative agreements, or other transactions as are necessary to carry out Authority duties, including any contracts, leases, or cooperative agreements with--

“(A) any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States;

“(B) any State (including a political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of the State); or

“(C) any person, firm, association, or corporation; and

“(10) establish and maintain a central office and field offices at such locations as the Authority may select.

“(f) **FEDERAL AGENCY COOPERATION.**--A Federal agency shall--

“(1) cooperate with the Authority; and

“(2) provide, on request of the Federal cochairperson, appropriate assistance in carrying out this subtitle, in accordance with applicable Federal laws (including regulations).

“(g) **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.**--

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**--Administrative expenses of the Authority (except for the expenses of the Federal cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Federal cochairperson, which shall be paid solely by the Federal Government) shall be paid--

“(A) by the Federal Government, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses; and

“(B) by the States in the region participating in the Authority, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses.

“(2) **STATE SHARE.**--

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**--The share of administrative expenses of the Authority to be paid by each State shall be determined by the Authority.

“(B) **NO FEDERAL PARTICIPATION.**--The Federal cochairperson shall not participate or vote in any decision under subparagraph (A).

“(C) **DELINQUENT STATES.**--If a State is delinquent in payment of the State's share of administrative expenses of the Authority under this subsection--

“(i) no assistance under this subtitle shall be furnished to the State (including assistance to a political subdivision or a resident of the State); and

“(ii) no member of the Authority from the State shall participate or vote in any action by the Authority.

“(h) **COMPENSATION.**--

“(1) **FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.**--The Federal cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule in subchapter II of chapter 53 of title V, United States Code.

“(2) **ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.**--The alternate Federal cochairperson--

“(A) shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule described in paragraph (1); and

“(B) when not actively serving as an alternate for the Federal cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Federal cochairperson.

“(3) **STATE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES.**--

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**--A State shall compensate each member and alternate representing the State on the Authority at the rate established by law of the State.

“(B) **NO ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION.**--No State member or alternate member shall receive any salary, or any contribution to or supplementation of salary from any source other than the State for services provided by the member or alternate to the Authority.

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“(4) **DETAILED EMPLOYEES.**--

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**--No person detailed to serve the Authority under subsection (e)(6) shall receive any salary or any contribution to or supplementation of salary for services provided to the Authority from--

“(i) any source other than the State, local, or intergovernmental department or agency from which the person was detailed; or

“(ii) the Authority.

“(B) **VIOLATION.**--Any person that violates this paragraph shall be fined not more than \$5,000, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

“(C) **APPLICABLE LAW.**--The Federal cochairperson, the alternate Federal cochairperson, and any Federal officer or employee detailed to duty on the Authority under subsection (e)(5) shall not be subject to subparagraph (A), but shall remain subject to sections 202 through 209 of title 18, United States Code.

“(5) **ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL.**--

“(A) **COMPENSATION.**--



“(i) **IN GENERAL.**--The Authority may appoint and fix the compensation of an executive director and such other personnel as are necessary to enable the Authority to carry out the duties of the Authority.

“(ii) **EXCEPTION.**--Compensation under clause (i) shall not exceed the maximum rate for the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, United States Code, including any applicable locality-based comparability payment that may be authorized under section 5304(h)(2)(C) of that title.

“(B) **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**--The executive director shall be responsible for--

“(i) the carrying out of the administrative duties of the Authority;

“(ii) direction of the Authority staff; and

“(iii) such other duties as the Authority may assign.

“(C) **NO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE STATUS.**--No member, alternate, officer, or employee of the Authority (except the Federal cochairperson of the Authority, the alternate and staff for the Federal cochairperson, and any Federal employee detailed to the Authority under subsection (e)(5)) shall be considered to be a Federal employee for any purpose.

“(i) **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.**--

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**--Except as provided under paragraph (2), no State member, alternate, officer, or employee of the Authority shall participate personally and substantially as a member, alternate, officer, or employee of the Authority, through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, the rendering of advice, investigation, or otherwise, in any proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, or other matter in which, to knowledge of the member, alternate, officer, or employee--

“(A) the member, alternate, officer, or employee;

“(B) the spouse, minor child, partner, or organization (other than a State or political subdivision of the State) of the member, alternate, officer, or employee, in which the member, alternate, officer, or employee is serving as officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee; or

“(C) any person or organization with whom the member, alternate, officer, or employee is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment; has a financial interest.

“(2) **DISCLOSURE.**--Paragraph (1) shall not apply if the State member, alternate, officer, or employee--

“(A) immediately advises the Authority of the nature and circumstances of the proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, or other particular matter presenting a potential conflict of interest;

“(B) makes full disclosure of the financial interest; and

“(C) before the proceeding concerning the matter presenting the conflict of interest, receives a written determination by the Authority that the interest is not so substantial as to be likely to affect the integrity of the services that the Authority may expect from the State member, alternate, officer, or employee.

“(3) **VIOLATION.**--Any person that violates this subsection shall be fined not more than \$10,000, imprisoned not more than 2 years, or both.

“(j) **VALIDITY OF CONTRACTS, LOANS, AND GRANTS.**--The Authority may declare void any contract, loan, or grant of or by the Authority in relation to which the Authority determines that there has been a violation of any provision under subsection (h)(4), subsection (i), or sections 202 through 209 of title 18, United States Code.

**``SEC. 382C. ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS.**

**``(a) IN GENERAL.**--The Authority may approve grants to States and public and nonprofit entities for projects, approved in accordance with section 382I--

**``(1)** to develop the transportation infrastructure of the region for the purpose of facilitating economic development in the region (except that grants for this purpose may only be made to a State or local government);

**``(2)** to assist the region in obtaining the job training, employment-related education, and business development (with an emphasis on entrepreneurship) that are needed to build and maintain strong local economies;

**``(3)** to provide assistance to severely distressed and underdeveloped areas that lack financial resources for improving basic public services;

**``(4)** to provide assistance to severely distressed and underdeveloped areas that lack financial resources for equipping industrial parks and related facilities; and

**``(5)** to otherwise achieve the purposes of this subtitle.

**``(b) FUNDING.**--

**``(1) IN GENERAL.**--Funds for grants under subsection (a) may be provided--

**``(A)** entirely from appropriations to carry out this section;

**``(B)** in combination with funds available under another Federal or Federal grant program; or

**``(C)** from any other source.

**``(2) PRIORITY OF FUNDING.**--To best build the foundations for long-term economic development and to complement other Federal and State resources in the region, Federal funds available under this subtitle shall be focused on the activities in the following order or priority:

**``(A)** Basic public infrastructure in distressed counties and isolated areas of distress.

**``(B)** Transportation infrastructure for the purpose of facilitating economic development in the region.

**``(C)** Business development, with emphasis on entrepreneurship.

**``(D)** Job training or employment-related education, with emphasis on use of existing public educational institutions located in the region.

**``(3) FEDERAL SHARE IN GRANT PROGRAMS.**--Notwithstanding any provision of law limiting the Federal share in any grant program, funds appropriated to carry out this section may be used to increase a Federal share in a grant program, as the Authority determines appropriate.

**``SEC. 382D. SUPPLEMENTS TO FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS.**

**``(a) FINDING.**--Congress finds that certain States and local communities of the region, including local development districts, may be unable to take maximum advantage of Federal grant programs for which the States and communities are eligible because--

**``(1)** they lack the economic resources to meet the required matching share; or

**``(2)** there are insufficient funds available under the applicable Federal grant law authorizing the program to meet pressing needs of the region.

**``(b) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING.**--In accordance with subsection (c), the Federal cochairperson may use amounts made available to carry out this subtitle, without regard to any limitations on areas eligible for assistance or authorizations for appropriation under any other Act, to fund all or any portion of the basic Federal contribution to a project or activity under a Federal grant program in the region in an amount that is above the fixed maximum portion of the cost of the project otherwise authorized by applicable law, but not to exceed 90 percent of the costs of the project (except as provided in section 382F(b)).

**“(c) CERTIFICATION.--**

**“(1) IN GENERAL.--**In the case of any program or project for which all or any portion of the basic Federal contribution to the project under a Federal grant program is proposed to be made under this section, no Federal contribution shall be made until the Federal official administering the Federal law authorizing the contribution certifies that the program or project--

**“(A)** meets the applicable requirements of the applicable Federal grant law; and

**“(B)** could be approved for Federal contribution under the law if funds were available under the law for the program or project.

**“(2) CERTIFICATION BY AUTHORITY.--**

**“(A) IN GENERAL.--**The certifications and determinations required to be made by the Authority for approval of projects under this subtitle in accordance with section 382I--

**“(i)** shall be controlling; and

**“(ii)** shall be accepted by the Federal agencies.

**“(B) ACCEPTANCE BY FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.--**Any finding, report, certification, or documentation required to be submitted to the head of the department, agency, or instrumentality of the Federal Government responsible for the administration of any Federal grant program shall be accepted by the Federal cochairperson with respect to a supplemental grant for any project under the program.

**“SEC. 382E. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS; CERTIFICATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.**

**“(a) DEFINITION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT.--**In this section, the term ‘local development district’ means an entity that--

**“(1) is--**

**“(A)** a planning district in existence on the date of enactment of this subtitle that is recognized by the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce; or

**“(B)** where an entity described in subparagraph (A) does not exist--

**“(i)** organized and operated in a manner that ensures broad-based community participation and an effective opportunity for other nonprofit groups to contribute to the development and implementation of programs in the region;

**“(ii)** governed by a policy board with at least a simple majority of members consisting of elected officials or employees of a general purpose unit of local government who have been appointed to represent the government;

**“(iii)** certified to the Authority as having a charter or authority that includes the economic development of counties or parts of counties or other political subdivisions within the region--

**“(I)** by the Governor of each State in which the entity is located; or

**“(II)** by the State officer designated by the appropriate State law to make the certification; and

**“(iv)(I)** a nonprofit incorporated body organized or chartered under the law of the State in which the entity is located;

**“(II)** a nonprofit agency or instrumentality of a State or local government;

**“(III)** a public organization established before the date of enactment of this subtitle under State law for creation of multi-jurisdictional, area-wide planning organizations; or

**“(IV)** a nonprofit association or combination of bodies, agencies, and instrumentalities described in subclauses (I) through (III); and

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**“(2)** has not, as certified by the Federal cochairperson--

`` (A) inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source; or  
 `` (B) appointed an officer who, during the period in which another entity inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source, was an officer of the other entity.  
 `` (b) **GRANTS TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.**--  
 `` (1) **IN GENERAL.**--The Authority may make grants for administrative expenses under this section.  
 `` (2) **CONDITIONS FOR GRANTS.**--  
 `` (A) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT.**--The amount of any grant awarded under paragraph (1) shall not exceed 80 percent of the administrative expenses of the local development district receiving the grant.  
 `` (B) **MAXIMUM PERIOD.**--No grant described in paragraph (1) shall be awarded to a State agency certified as a local development district for a period greater than 3 years.  
 `` (C) **LOCAL SHARE.**--The contributions of a local development district for administrative expenses may be in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including space, equipment, and services.  
 `` (c) **DUTIES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.**--A local development district shall--  
 `` (1) operate as a lead organization serving multicounty areas in the region at the local level; and  
 `` (2) serve as a liaison between State and local governments, nonprofit organizations (including community-based groups and educational institutions), the business community, and citizens that--  
 `` (A) are involved in multijurisdictional planning;  
 `` (B) provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions and potential grantees; and  
 `` (C) provide leadership and civic development assistance.  
**`` SEC. 382F. DISTRESSED COUNTIES AND AREAS AND NONDISTRESSED COUNTIES.**  
 `` (a) **DESIGNATIONS.**--Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this subtitle, and annually thereafter, the Authority, in accordance with such criteria as the Authority may establish, shall designate--  
 `` (1) as distressed counties, counties in the region that are the most severely and persistently distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty or unemployment;  
 `` (2) as nondistressed counties, counties in the region that are not designated as distressed counties under paragraph (1); and  
 `` (3) as isolated areas of distress, areas located in nondistressed counties (as designated under paragraph (2)) that have high rates of poverty or unemployment.  
 `` (b) **DISTRESSED COUNTIES.**--  
 `` (1) **IN GENERAL.**--The Authority shall allocate at least 75 percent of the appropriations made available under section 382M for programs and projects designed to serve the needs of distressed counties and isolated areas of distress in the region.  
 `` (2) **FUNDING LIMITATIONS.**--The funding limitations under section 382D(b) shall not apply to a project providing transportation or basic public services to residents of 1 or more distressed counties or isolated areas of distress in the region.  
 `` (c) **NONDISTRESSED COUNTIES.**--  
 `` (1) **IN GENERAL.**--Except as provided in this subsection, no funds shall be provided under this subtitle for a project located in a county designated as a nondistressed county under subsection (a)(2).

**“(2) EXCEPTIONS.--**

**“(A) IN GENERAL.--**The funding prohibition under paragraph (1) shall not apply to grants to fund the administrative expenses of local development districts under section 382E(b).

**“(B) MULTICOUNTY PROJECTS.--**The Authority may waive the application of the funding prohibition under paragraph (1) to--

**“(i)** a multicounty project that includes participation by a nondistressed county; or

**“(ii)** any other type of project;

if the Authority determines that the project could bring significant benefits to areas of the region outside a nondistressed county.

**“(C) ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.--**For a designation of an isolated area of distress for assistance to be effective, the designation shall be supported--

**“(i)** by the most recent Federal data available; or

**“(ii)** if no recent Federal data are available, by the most recent data available through the government of the State in which the isolated area of distress is located.

**“(d) TRANSPORTATION AND BASIC PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE.--**The Authority shall allocate at least 50 percent of any funds made available under section 382M for transportation and basic public infrastructure projects authorized under paragraphs (1) and (3) of section 382C(a).

**“SEC. 382G. DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS.**

**“(a) STATE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.--**In accordance with policies established by the Authority, each State member shall submit a development plan for the area of the region represented by the State member.

**“(b) CONTENT OF PLAN.--**A State development plan submitted under subsection (a) shall reflect the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in the regional development plan developed under section 382B(d)(2).

**“(c) CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED LOCAL PARTIES.--**In carrying out the development planning process (including the selection of programs and projects for assistance), a State may--

**“(1)** consult with--

**“(A)** local development districts; and

**“(B)** local units of government; and

**“(2)** take into consideration the goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations of the entities described in paragraph (1).

**“(d) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.--**

**“(1) IN GENERAL.--**The Authority and applicable State and local development districts shall encourage and assist, to the maximum extent practicable, public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of all plans and programs under this subtitle.

**“(2) REGULATIONS.--**The Authority shall develop guidelines for providing public participation described in paragraph (1), including public hearings.

**“SEC. 382H. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA.**

**“(a) IN GENERAL.--**In considering programs and projects to be provided assistance under this subtitle, and in establishing a priority ranking of the requests for assistance provided by the Authority, the Authority shall follow procedures that ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, consideration of--

**“(1)** the relationship of the project or class of projects to overall regional development;

`` (2) the per capita income and poverty and unemployment rates in an area;  
 `` (3) the financial resources available to the applicants for assistance seeking to carry out the project, with emphasis on ensuring that projects are adequately financed to maximize the probability of successful economic development;  
 `` (4) the importance of the project or class of projects in relation to other projects or classes of projects that may be in competition for the same funds;  
 `` (5) the prospects that the project for which assistance is sought will improve, on a continuing rather than a temporary basis, the opportunities for employment, the average level of income, or the economic development of the area served by the project; and  
 `` (6) the extent to which the project design provides for detailed outcome measurements by which grant expenditures and the results of the expenditures may be evaluated.  
 `` (b) **NO RELOCATION ASSISTANCE.**--No financial assistance authorized by this subtitle shall be used to assist a person or entity in relocating from 1 area to another, except that financial assistance may be used as otherwise authorized by this title to attract businesses from outside the region to the region.  
 `` (c) **REDUCTION OF FUNDS.**--Funds may be provided for a program or project in a State under this subtitle only if the Authority determines that the level of Federal or State financial assistance provided under a law other than this subtitle, for the same type of program or project in the same area of the State within the region, will not be reduced as a result of funds made available by this subtitle.  
 `` **SEC. 382I. APPROVAL OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROJECTS.**  
 `` (a) **IN GENERAL.**--A State or regional development plan or any multistate subregional plan that is proposed for development under this subtitle shall be reviewed by the Authority.  
 `` (b) **EVALUATION BY STATE MEMBER.**--An application for a grant or any other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be made through and evaluated for approval by the State member of the Authority representing the applicant.  
 `` (c) **CERTIFICATION.**--An application for a grant or other assistance for a project shall be approved only on certification by the State member that the application for the project--  
 `` (1) describes ways in which the project complies with any applicable State development plan;  
 `` (2) meets applicable criteria under section 382H;  
 `` (3) provides adequate assurance that the proposed project will be properly administered, operated, and maintained; and  
 `` (4) otherwise meets the requirements of this subtitle.  
 `` (d) **VOTES FOR DECISIONS.**--On certification by a State member of the Authority of an application for a grant or other assistance for a specific project under this section, an affirmative vote of the Authority under section 382B(c) shall be required for approval of the application.  
 `` **SEC. 382J. CONSENT OF STATES.**  
 `` Nothing in this subtitle requires any State to engage in or accept any program under this subtitle without the consent of the State.  
 `` **SEC. 382K. RECORDS.**  
 `` (a) **RECORDS OF THE AUTHORITY.**--  
 `` (1) **IN GENERAL.**--The Authority shall maintain accurate and complete records of all transactions and activities of the Authority.  
 `` (2) **AVAILABILITY.**--All records of the Authority shall be available for audit and examination by the Comptroller General of the United States and the Inspector General of the

Department of Agriculture (including authorized representatives of the Comptroller General and the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture).

**“(b) RECORDS OF RECIPIENTS OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE.--**

**“(1) IN GENERAL.--**A recipient of Federal funds under this subtitle shall, as required by the Authority, maintain accurate and complete records of transactions and activities financed with Federal funds and report on the transactions and activities to the Authority.

**“(2) AVAILABILITY.--**All records required under paragraph (1) shall be available for audit by the Comptroller General of the United States, the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture, and the Authority (including authorized representatives of the Comptroller General, the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture, and the Authority).

**“(c) ANNUAL AUDIT.--**The Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture shall audit the activities, transactions, and records of the Authority on an annual basis.

**“SEC. 382L. ANNUAL REPORT.**

**“Not later than 180 days after the end of each fiscal year, the Authority shall submit to the**

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President and to Congress a report describing the activities carried out under this subtitle.

**“SEC. 382M. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

**“(a) IN GENERAL.--**There is authorized to be appropriated to the Authority to carry out this subtitle \$30,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2001 through 2002, to remain available until expended.

**“(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.--**Not more than 5 percent of the amount appropriated under subsection (a) for a fiscal year shall be used for administrative expenses of the Authority.

**“SEC. 382N. TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.**

**“This subtitle and the authority provided under this subtitle expire on October 1, 2002.”.**

**SEC. 504. AREA COVERED BY LOWER MISSISSIPPI DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION.**

**(a) IN GENERAL.--**Section 4(2)(D) of the Delta Development Act (42 U.S.C. 3121 note; 102 Stat. 2246) is amended by inserting “Natchitoches,” after “Winn,”.

**(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.--**The matter under the heading “SALARIES AND EXPENSES” under the heading “FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION” in title II of Public Law 100-460 (102 Stat. 2246) is amended in the fourth proviso by striking “carry out” and all that follows through “bills are hereby” and inserting “carry out S. 2836, the Delta Development Act, as introduced in the Senate on September 27, 1988, and that bill is”.

**{NOTE: BELOW IS THE TEXT OF THE AMENDMENT ADDING 16 COUNTIES IN ALABAMA TO THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION}**

SEC. 153. (a) Section 4(2) of the Delta Development Act (42 U.S.C. 3121 note; Public Law 100-460) is amended--

(1) by inserting “Alabama,” before “Arkansas”;

(2) in paragraph (G), by striking “and” at the end;

(3) in paragraph (H)--

(A) by striking ``and" before ``such"; and

(B) by inserting ``and" after the semicolon at the end; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

``(I) the Alabama counties of Pickens, Greene, Sumter, Choctaw, Clarke, Washington, Marengo, Hale, Perry, Wilcox, Lowndes, Bullock, Macon, Barbour, Russell, and Dallas;"

(b) At the end of section 382A of ``The Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000" as incorporated in this Act, insert the following:

``(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the State of Alabama shall be a full member of the Delta Regional Authority and shall be entitled to all rights and privileges that said membership affords to all other participating States in the Delta Regional Authority.".



## **MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ARKANSAS DELTA CIRCUIT RIDER INITIATIVE**

(Signed by all participating Agencies as of August 4, 2000)

This Memorandum of Agreement is made and entered into by and among the Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Energy, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Department of the Treasury, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, (hereinafter referred to as the Agencies).

For the purpose of eligibility for this Initiative, the "Arkansas Delta" is defined as those Arkansas counties identified in the 1990 Report of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission.

The Agencies agree to the following:

1.     **Management:** The Department of Agriculture (USDA) will manage the Initiative. Each participating agency will be responsible for providing the staff and administrative support required to carry out and support that agency's functions and activities under the Initiative.
2.     **Authorization:** The Initiative will be managed in accordance with the President's Memorandum of December 10, 1999, outlining his intent for the Initiative, the terms of which are incorporated herein (See attachment).
3.     **Purpose:** The purpose of this Initiative is to establish an Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider Pilot Project to provide local level technical assistance in community-based development needs. The program is to be a concentrated, coordinated effort by the Agencies. The program will pursue a comprehensive approach addressing needs such as housing, economic development, job training, welfare-to-work issues, transportation, environment, tourism, cultural resources, infrastructure, technology, education, and healthcare.
4.     **Program:** The Circuit Rider Initiative will provide technical assistance at the local level. The designated staff will assist rural communities in the Arkansas Delta in:
  - identifying community needs and priorities in economic and community development (including educational issues),
  - coordinating Federal resources in the participating communities,
  - drafting strategic plans to leverage both private and public resources for such development; and
- implementing the plans.

The staff will be based in the USDA Rural Development State office in Little Rock. The USDA Rural Development State Director in Arkansas will coordinate the requests for service; will assemble teams from the Agencies to visit communities, as appropriate, and will determine the priority for service. To the extent possible and practical, the USDA Rural Development State Director will engage appropriate offices of the State of Arkansas in community briefings and in the provision of assistance to client communities. Furthermore, to the extent possible and practical, this Initiative shall promote coalition-building among Federal, State and local governments, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other parties interested in providing local level technical assistance in community-based development needs.

The USDA Rural Development Office of Community Development and the Senior Community Builder from the Arkansas State Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development area office will assist communities in capacity and community building and with the development of strategic plans. The Agencies will, as requested by the USDA Rural Development State Director for Arkansas, assign appropriate personnel to participate in community meetings, provide assistance to communities with strategic planning assistance and guidance in meeting local needs, and in applying for financial assistance through Federal programs. The Federal staff participating in this Initiative shall not draft applications for individual applicants who are applying for assistance to the Agencies.

5. Resources required: The USDA will provide one Federal staff position to act as project coordinator and ensure effective implementation of the proposal. The annual cost of the additional position (GS-12), and associated support costs, shall not exceed \$110,000. The investment of resources by each Agency will vary depending on the specific needs of each community, but may include providing information, conducting travelling seminars, deploying staff or providing funds. The details of the funding to be furnished to the USDA by the other Agencies participating in this memorandum will be developed in specific inter-agency agreements pursuant to the Economy Act, (31 USC 1535), or other appropriate statutory authority. This document is not intended to enumerate any specifics regarding funding, but is a memorandum which broadly states basic understandings between the parties hereto of the tasks and methods for performing the tasks described herein.
6. Timeline: This pilot project will be in effect for a five-year period beginning from the date of this agreement.
7. Reporting Requirements

Each participating community shall report annually to the USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development. The report shall assess the progress made in the preceding period

toward the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan, and suggesting any adjustments that need to be made.

In addition, upon completion of a strategic plan, each participating community shall enter benchmarks into the USDA Office of Community Development Benchmarking Management System, within 120 days of the approval of the strategic plan. USDA will distribute these reports to the other Agencies.

#### 8. Principal Contacts

To provide for consistent and effective communication between the participating Agencies, each of the participating agencies shall appoint a representative to discuss and consider activities that may be pursued under this Memorandum.

This Agreement is dated \_\_\_\_\_.

Federal Government: Department of Agriculture (Chair)

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Labor

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of the Treasury

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Commerce

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Defense

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of the Interior

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Education

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Energy

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Housing and Urban Development

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Transportation

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Secretary

Department of Veterans Affairs

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary

Small Business Administration

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Administrator

Environmental Protection Agency

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Administrator

Attachment: Memorandum from the President of the United States, "Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider Pilot Project," December 10, 1999

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES**

### **EMPOWERMENT ZONE/ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

**Spring, 2000-January, 2001**

#### **Southern Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone (EZ) June, 2000-January, 2001**

- The EZ's Transportation Committee worked with area transportation providers to encourage establishment of public transit district. Four of five counties have passed board resolutions of endorsement. 45 miles of gravel roads have been upgraded to oil and chip on a cost share basis between the counties and the EZ.
- The EZ was awarded a \$114,600 Rural Business Opportunity Grant from USDA Rural Development and hired a credit counselor to assist residents of the zone with repairing credit problems.
- The zone received a \$15,473 Illinois Bureau of Tourism Marketing Partnership Program grant to advertise SIDEZ tourist attractions in regional and national print media, develop a tourism marketing brochure and redesign a tourism web site. The zone will match the grant with EZ funds.
- The EZ received a \$750,000 Intermediary Relending Program loan from USDA-Rural Development and has begun accepting loan applications. Two industrial sites in Pulaski County were purchased with SIDEZ assistance. As a result, two new commercial buildings have been constructed and 10 new jobs created. The zone approved the allocation of a total of \$9 million EZ bonds for an industrial expansion project.

#### **Greene/Sumter Counties Enterprise Community (EC), Alabama, June, 2000, to January, 2001**

- The EC provided \$60,000 to West Alabama Health Services to purchase nine 15-passenger vans. The project seeks to provide access to transportation for Welfare to Work, job training, and health services. The \$60,000 from the EC will be matched with \$300,000 as part of the Rural Transportation Capital Program.
- The EC will provide \$5,500 to the President's Student Service Challenge, which provides a \$500 scholarship to high students with the stipulations that they complete 100 hours of community work. The Community must also match the \$500 awards. The program will provide scholarships to two high school students from each of the high schools that are in the Enterprise Community area.

#### **North Delta Mississippi Enterprise Community**

- **The EC received funding award from U.S. Treasury:** U.S. Treasury's CDFI Fund Awards to Community Development Credit Unions were announced October 4, 2000. The U.S. Department of Treasury has provided 23 awards totaling \$7.7 million to Community Development Credit Unions (CDCUs) through the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. Included in the total were seven awards under the Fund's "Core Component, totaling \$4.96 million and 16 awards totaling \$731,850 under the "Technical Assistance Component"; in addition, over \$2 million was committed to a credit

union support organization under the “Intermediary Component.” Quitman/Tri-County Federal Credit Union located in Marks, MS part of the North Delta Mississippi Enterprise Community received a \$69,000 award.

- **Race Relations Conference in Marks, Mississippi:** Following up on a successful race relations workshop in November entitled "A Day of Reconciliation", North Delta Mississippi EC and Valley Bank hosted a race relations conference at the Quitman County Courthouse in Marks, Mississippi. The luncheon speaker for the conference was U.S. Senator for Mississippi, Thad Cochran. The conference will also have Bishop Jack Meadors of the United Methodist Church, Gerald Taylor of Industrial Areas Foundation, Dr. Bill Harris of Jackson State University, Reverend Leroy Wadlington of the National Baptist Church and USDA Rural Development State Director Bill Simpson as featured speakers. The conference was held on March 4, 2000 and was entitled “Can We Come to a Consensus?” The conference was an innovative opportunity that promoted a major dialogue on race relations.

#### **East Prairie Missouri Enterprise Community (EC)**

- The EC will serve as the sole provider of services for a County Juvenile Justice Prevention grant. The grant was awarded to Mississippi County, Missouri to keep buildings open at night and on weekends for youth, providing tutoring sessions, mentoring and recreational activities, to keep the youth busy and productively occupied. The grant amount is for approximately \$100,000 for each of three years, and is the maximum funding available. The EC has had a similar three-year grant with the City of Charleston, used to provide the "We Vision Program," which has been recognized as a "best practice" program. The new grant will be utilized to provide services to residents at the Bowden Center in Charleston as well as Susanna Wesley Building and Housing Authority in East Prairie.
- **Workforce Development Contract Award:** The Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center, which serves as the lead entity for the East Prairie Missouri Enterprise Community, was given a Workforce Investment Board Contract on May 16. The purpose of the contract is to provide year-round jobs for the youth in seven southern Missouri counties. Susanna Wesley and the SPIRALS Job Training Program, both co-located in the Enterprise Community, were awarded \$852,840 to serve 1,183 youth between the ages of 14 and 21. Various employers and sponsors have partnered to make the program successful. Partners include the Mingo Job Corps at Puxico, Dunklin County Caring Communities in Kennett, New Madrid County Caring Communities and Missouri Mentoring partnership at the New Madrid County Family Resource Center and Mission Missouri in Sikeston.

#### **Fayette/Haywood Enterprise Community, Tennessee**

**University of Tennessee - Business College Series:** The Fayette-Haywood County Enterprise Community (EC) voted to endorse and co-sponsor an upcoming Business College series to be

conducted by the University of Tennessee Extension Service. The series will begin on September 28<sup>th</sup> and will consist of 11 monthly sessions alternating locations between Fayette and Haywood Counties. Topics cover Financing a Business, Community Assessment for Business, Business Plans, Business Incubators, Strategic Planning for Businesses, Accounting for Non-Accountants, Financial Management and Analysis, Using a Computer in Small Business, Personnel Management, Marketing, Visual Merchandising, and Customer Relations. The EC granted funds earlier to the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce for Small Business development classes. The balance of those funds will be used toward this program and graduation expenses. This will further establish the partnership between the EC and the local Chambers of Commerce.

**Additional Meetings with Grassroots Leaders in the Delta:**

**Delta Council meeting:** On March 14<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Department of Transportation Chief of Staff Jerry Malone, Deputy Assistant Secretary Al Eisenberg, Wilson Golden of Congressional Affairs, and Lee Powell of the USDA Office of Community Development met with the leadership of the Delta Council, an organization of private business leaders interested in economic development in the Mississippi Delta. The purpose of the meeting in Itta Bena, Mississippi, at Mississippi Valley State University was to discuss the Delta 2000 Initiative and the proposal for a permanent regional commission in the Delta region. Jerry Malone emphasized that such a regional commission would be driven from the grassroots level, not from Washington, and the Council members indicated they were impressed by his presentation. The Delta Council meeting was held shortly before Under Secretary Jill Long Thompson of USDA Rural Development, Assistant Secretary Judith Johnson of the U.S. Department of Education, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Eisenberg testified at U.S. Senator Thad Cochran's field hearing at Mississippi Valley State University regarding regional issues. Under Secretary Thompson summarized the many activities of Rural Development throughout the Mississippi Delta region.

**Delta Compact meeting:** Immediately after the Delta Council meeting, DOT Chief of Staff Jerry Malone went to Clarksdale for the Delta Compact Summit, which was attended by more than 150 grassroots leaders from throughout the region. Moses Williams of the Northeast Louisiana Delta Enterprise Community was selected as chair of the Delta Compact. Jerry Malone spoke at the Summit about the Clinton-Gore Administration's Delta 2000 Initiative, which aims to promote community and economic development throughout the seven-state Delta region. He discussed the Delta Regional Authority Act introduced by U.S. Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Congressman Marion Berry of Arkansas, along with the Administration's national delta conference scheduled for Washington, DC on May 10<sup>th</sup> –11<sup>th</sup>.

**Department of Transportation National Corridor Planning and Development:**

- On June 9, U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater announced that \$121.8 million in grants would be provided to 29 states for 65 projects as part of the National Corridor Planning and Development and the Coordinated Border Infrastructure programs for fiscal 2000. Of these awards, over \$25 million were for projects in or serving the lower Mississippi Delta region.

**U.S. Small Business Administration**

## **Mid-America Lenders Conference**

SBA's Louisiana District Office hosted a major lending conference for financial institutions in New Orleans, Louisiana. Held August 9-11, the conference brought together approximately 400 lenders from the region, including several from Louisiana and Arkansas Mississippi Delta counties. The theme of the conference, "SBA Lending: Your Bridge to a New Beginning," continues to reflect SBA's innovation and commitment to aggressively seek new ways to help small businesses succeed in obtaining access to capital and credit.

## **Kentucky District Office**

Since April, Kentucky's Small Business Development Centers have held over 30 workshops/seminars in the state's 21 Delta counties. In addition, a Business Development Week was held in Trigg County the first week of May 2000.

## **Arkansas District Office**

SBA's Arkansas District Office is continuing to conduct "Circuit Rides" to a number of cities in the heart of Arkansas's Delta region. The SBA District Office is also working with a radio station in the Delta, speaking on a call-in program called "In The Gap." On the initial program SBA had few call-in's, however, when the show finished, there were several drop-in's waiting to visit with SBA. The District Office is planning to make this a regular item, scheduling one-on-one counseling sessions that the station will promote. The District Office is also working with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (a major Delta city in AR and a historically black college) to visit with each of their FasTrak entrepreneurial classes towards graduation and Pre Qual those who are ready and eligible for financing.

## **Department of Veterans Affairs**

Updates Since April Conference

### **State Veterans Cemetery Grant – North Little Rock, Arkansas - \$5.5 million**

Grants are provided to States for the establishment, expansion, or improvement of state veterans cemeteries. The state veterans cemeteries complement the national cemeteries and are a critical part of the National Cemetery System strategy for meeting the goal of assuring that the burial needs of veterans are met.

*VA plans to award a grant to begin construction within the next two months. It will serve over 100,000 veterans within a 75-mile radius of the 82-acre site. Currently, Arkansas, by means of a contract with an architectural and engineering team, is preparing plans for the project.*



Health Care for Veterans – Establishment of Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Natchez, Mississippi and Farmington, Missouri.

One of the most visible of all VA benefits is health care. Nationwide, VA has about 1200 care facilities, including 172 medical centers, 650 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 206 counseling centers and 40 domiciliary facilities. Technology and changes in national and VA health care trends have made medical care more accessible to veterans. VA has changed from a hospital-based system to a primarily outpatient-focused over the past five years.

In Mississippi, VA operates two major medical centers in Jackson and Biloxi. The 163-bed Jackson medical center also operates community-based outpatient clinics in Durant, Meridian, Hattiesburg and Greenville. Last year, 5,400 veterans were treated on an inpatient basis in Jackson while outpatient visits soared to 230,000 – a 100 percent increase over the last four years. *An outpatient clinic is scheduled to open in Natchez in October 2000.*

In Missouri, VA operates major medical centers in Columbia, Kansas City, Poplar Bluff and St. Louis. To provide better access to care for veterans, especially those living in rural areas, Missouri operated 11 community-based outpatient clinics, seven of which have been opened since 1997. *An outpatient clinic is scheduled to open in Farmington, Missouri in FY 2001.*

*In addition to the aforementioned projects, VA is currently reviewing proposals to establish community-based outpatient clinics in Savannah, Tennessee and Bahayala, Mississippi.*

### **State Veterans' Homes – Grant Pending in Madisonville, Kentucky**

Another integral component to VA services is the appropriation of construction grants. This funding, which can cover up to 65 percent of total construction costs, aids the States in the acquisition or construction of State nursing home care and domiciliary facilities and in the remodeling, modification or alteration of existing buildings for furnishing domiciliary, nursing home or hospital care to veterans in State homes. *Currently, a grant of \$9.6 million is pending for the Madisonville, Kentucky State home.*

### **Department of Labor**

#### ***Department of Labor Youth Opportunity Grants***

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration awarded 36 five-year grants with first-year funding totaling \$223 million to targeted high-poverty urban, rural, and Native American areas. These grants will expand employment, education and training opportunities to at-risk in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 14 - 21. These grants will establish partnerships with various federal, state, and local government officials; municipalities; businesses; educators; post-secondary institutions; community-based organizations, parents, and

other key partners to establish a comprehensive system of service delivery for youth. Three of these grants will serve residents of the counties/parishes of the Lower Mississippi Delta Region.

***City of Memphis, Private Industry Council***

***Amount of Federal Grant: \$6.5 million (approx.)***

***(Up to \$26 million over 5 years)***

This project will serve more than 4,500 youth from the **Eastern, Southern, and Northern Districts of the Memphis Enterprise Community**. These three areas comprise 17 contiguous census tracts with approximately 1,100 youth that have either dropped out of school or would be considered out-of-school youth. The dropout rate for youth in this area is 52 percent. Unemployment in the Enterprise Community runs higher than 30 percent and the poverty rate is more than 48 percent.

The Memphis Youth Opportunity Center Initiative is a collaborative effort of businesses, government officials, educators and public and nonprofit agencies. Critical to the initiative is the establishment of the Memphis Youth Opportunity Center which will have three YO! Centers or satellite sites. Program staff will "team up" with participants to ensure they have the resources needed to gain, retain and build on educational and employment opportunities. Basic and occupational skills training will focus on high demand jobs in health, science and technology, building trades and hospitality and tourism services. One key to developing a successful plan has been the involvement of several businesses such as the Regional Medical Center, Holiday Inn, Nike and in particular Federal Express which has agreed to provide mentors and apprenticeship opportunities for 100 participants.

Overall the program will assess the academic status, skills, aptitudes, interests and needs of participants; develop a service plan that is unique to the individual; coordinate formal and informal services; follow-up on both the participant and the service provider; advocate on behalf of participants; and provide participants support services including individual, family or group counseling.

***Pine Bluff, Arkansas***

***Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc.***

***Amount of Federal Grant: \$5 million(Up to \$25 million over 5 years)***

**Chicot and Desha counties of southeast Arkansas** are characterized by unemployment rates that are double the state and national average. More than one of every ten area teen females will become pregnant, and 90 percent of female headed households live below the poverty level. The 1998, the drop-out rate of the six school districts in these counties was 29 percent, and 73 percent of area school children qualified for free and reduced price lunch programs. This project will target youth in this southeastern-most section of Arkansas where 54 percent of the out-of-school population have not completed high school.

Seeking to bring much needed services to youth in southeast Arkansas through a One-Stop system of service delivery, this project will be centrally located at the Community Center. One

satellite Community Center will be located at the nearby One-Stop Center in Lake Village, Chicot County. The Community Center will share programming, staffing and electronic Job Bank resources with the One-Stop. Phoenix Youth and Family Services, the primary youth serving agency in the target area, will be co-located at the Community Center. Four satellite centers will be located at each of the school districts' high schools or junior high schools. At these centers, at-risk youth will be exposed to drop-out prevention strategies and will be directed to post-secondary educational opportunities.

A comprehensive, coordinated and family-based approach to youth services is the cornerstone of this project. Project and school staff will develop an at-risk profile, based upon the unique challenges of drop-out youth, and use this profile as an indicator for at-risk youth in area schools. Project specialists will then work with the at-risk youth, the family and a team of public and private service providers to best meet the needs of the individual youth customer. Services will be planned with youth and families for both at-risk and out-of-school youth.

Beyond outreach and recruitment through the areas six school districts, this project will launch an aggressive community awareness and marketing campaign. Referrals to this project will be possible via an 1-800 telephone number as well as through an on-line information and referral network. At the outset of the project, youth will be assessed to determine their educational level, aptitude, and occupational preference. Additionally, project specialists will seek family input as well. Using a Community Investment Team for Youth (CITY), youths and families will participate in creating a service plan for youth.

Project services available to participating youth are numerous. For youth who are ready for employment but lack soft skills necessary to maintain employment, project specialists will conduct specific soft skills training. Existing GED programs will be expanded and a One+One program will be created for youth who would like to finish their GED while maintaining a job. Each youth customer will be provided with a mentor who will follow the youth through the program and during project follow-up. Project staff will work with major employers, both private and not-for-profit, to create a database of available positions within their businesses. Additionally, support services like mental health, disability accommodation, childcare and transportation will be provided to enable youth to fully participate in project activities.

***Monroe, Louisiana***

***Private Industry Council***

***Amount of Federal Grant: \$5 million (Up to \$20 million over 5 years)***

The goal of this grant is to develop a tailored program for in and out-of-school youth, that will provide youth incentives to stay with the program, teach youth the prerequisite skills needed to succeed in adult work, and help youth establish career paths.

The Enterprise Community will consist of **East Carroll, Madison and Tensas located in the far northeast corner of the state** with most of the participants being recruited from **Newellton, Lake Providence and Tallulah**. Efforts will be directed at a population that is 30 percent white and 70 percent African-American. Residents have the lowest median income for a family of four in the nation which is less than half the official poverty level of \$14,764. More than 60 percent of the population does not have a high school diploma.

The Northeast Louisiana Delta Youth Initiative will focus on the **Parishes of East Carroll, Madison and Tensas, in the far northeast corner of the state**. Serving 630 out-of-school and 370 in-school youth, age 14-21, the program will be based in two Youth Opportunity Youth Centers. The project design is all encompassing allowing for tailored plans and incentives to stay in school.

Through recruitment and linkages with public and private resources, training will encompass courses in high-demand occupations including hospitality, welding, pipefitting and ship fitting. Three of the areas largest employers, API Outdoors, Inc., Avondale Industries and Tifton Aluminum, have pledged to provide jobs, internships, mentors and on-the-job training. As youth are assessed to determine their academic strengths and barriers, an academic program will be tailored to meet their special needs.

Labor force status of Mississippi Delta areas				
Twelve month average: August 1999-July 2000				
Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment Level	Rate
ARKANSAS	1,250,723	1,196,369	54,354	4.3
ARKANSAS COUNTY, AR	10,753	10,192	561	5.2
ASHLEY COUNTY, AR	10,829	10,059	770	7.1
BAXTER COUNTY, AR	14,456	13,927	529	3.7
BRADLEY COUNTY, AR	4,435	4,081	354	8.0
CALHOUN COUNTY, AR	2,224	2,048	176	7.9
CHICOT COUNTY, AR	6,314	5,740	574	9.1
CLAY COUNTY, AR	8,023	7,551	472	5.9
CLEVELAND COUNTY, AR	3,988	3,787	201	5.0
CRAIGHEAD COUNTY, AR	43,238	41,800	1,438	3.3
CROSS COUNTY, AR	8,045	7,583	462	5.7
DALLAS COUNTY, AR	3,544	3,278	266	7.5
DESHA COUNTY, AR	7,039	6,300	739	10.5
DREW COUNTY, AR	9,855	9,213	642	6.5

FULTON COUNTY, AR	4,094	3,942	152	3.7
GRANT COUNTY, AR	7,261	6,901	360	5.0
GREENE COUNTY, AR	18,722	17,866	856	4.6
INDEPENDENCE COUNTY, AR	17,183	16,310	873	5.1
IZARD COUNTY, AR	4,363	4,177	186	4.3
JACKSON COUNTY, AR	7,917	7,133	784	9.9
LAWRENCE COUNTY, AR	7,234	6,777	457	6.3
LEE COUNTY, AR	4,644	4,319	325	7.0
LINCOLN COUNTY, AR	5,385	5,130	255	4.7
MARION COUNTY, AR	6,270	6,092	178	2.8
MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, AR	26,484	23,829	2,655	10.0
MONROE COUNTY, AR	4,027	3,792	235	5.8
OUACHITA COUNTY, AR	11,272	10,342	930	8.3
PHILLIPS COUNTY, AR	9,594	8,855	739	7.7
POINSETT COUNTY, AR	10,839	10,294	545	5.0
PRAIRIE COUNTY, AR	3,956	3,758	198	5.0
RANDOLPH COUNTY, AR	8,040	7,532	508	6.3
ST FRANCIS COUNTY, AR	12,335	11,305	1,030	8.4
SEARCY COUNTY, AR	2,930	2,773	157	5.4
SHARP COUNTY, AR	6,239	5,899	340	5.4
STONE COUNTY, AR	5,237	5,037	200	3.8
UNION COUNTY, AR	20,867	19,780	1,087	5.2
VAN BUREN COUNTY, AR	6,211	5,875	336	5.4
WHITE COUNTY, AR	31,857	30,427	1,430	4.5
WOODRUFF COUNTY, AR	3,851	3,514	337	8.8
ILLINOIS	6,424,526	6,149,535	274,991	4.3
ALEXANDER COUNTY, IL	3,915	3,586	329	8.4
FRANKLIN COUNTY, IL	16,435	15,178	1,257	7.6
GALLATIN COUNTY, IL	2,761	2,568	193	7.0
HAMILTON COUNTY, IL	3,724	3,512	212	5.7
HARDIN COUNTY, IL	1,809	1,682	127	7.0
JACKSON COUNTY, IL	29,166	28,077	1,089	3.7
JOHNSON COUNTY, IL	4,802	4,502	300	6.2
MASSAC COUNTY, IL	8,127	7,756	371	4.6

PERRY COUNTY, IL	8,842	7,974	868	9.8
POPE COUNTY, IL	1,739	1,599	140	8.1
PULASKI COUNTY, IL	2,927	2,665	262	9.0
RANDOLPH COUNTY, IL	13,842	13,129	713	5.2
SALINE COUNTY, IL	10,334	9,475	859	8.3
UNION COUNTY, IL	8,196	7,622	574	7.0
WHITE COUNTY, IL	7,288	6,903	385	5.3
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, IL	27,717	25,928	1,789	6.5
KENTUCKY	1,982,325	1,902,555	79,770	4.0
BALLARD COUNTY, KY	4,248	3,963	285	6.7
CALDWELL COUNTY, KY	6,588	6,323	265	4.0
CALLOWAY COUNTY, KY	17,644	17,096	548	3.1
CARLISLE COUNTY, KY	2,737	2,572	165	6.0
CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KY	28,534	27,454	1,080	3.8
CRITTENDEN COUNTY, KY	4,051	3,817	234	5.8
FULTON COUNTY, KY	3,388	3,170	218	6.4
GRAVES COUNTY, KY	17,184	16,355	829	4.8
HENDERSON COUNTY, KY	24,486	23,613	873	3.6
HICKMAN COUNTY, KY	2,485	2,389	96	3.9
HOPKINS COUNTY, KY	20,004	18,835	1,169	5.8
LIVINGSTON COUNTY, KY	4,897	4,638	259	5.3
LYON COUNTY, KY	3,346	3,182	164	4.9
MCCRACKEN COUNTY, KY	33,634	32,366	1,268	3.8
MC LEAN COUNTY, KY	4,802	4,533	269	5.6
MARSHALL COUNTY, KY	14,642	13,879	763	5.2
MUHLENBERG COUNTY, KY	12,544	11,695	849	6.8
TODD COUNTY, KY	5,369	5,217	152	2.8
TRIGG COUNTY, KY	6,000	5,809	191	3.2
UNION COUNTY, KY	6,008	5,686	322	5.4
WEBSTER COUNTY, KY	5,550	5,188	362	6.5
LOUISIANA	2,050,664	1,953,812	96,852	4.7
ACADIA PARISH, LA	23,892	22,300	1,592	6.7
ALLEN PARISH, LA	9,938	9,407	531	5.3
ASCENSION PARISH, LA	35,880	34,135	1,745	4.9

ASSUMPTION PARISH, LA	9,014	8,336	678	7.5
AVOYELLES PARISH, LA	16,163	15,216	947	5.9
CALDWELL PARISH, LA	4,316	4,002	314	7.3
CATAHOULA PARISH, LA	4,966	4,472	494	9.9
CONCORDIA PARISH, LA	8,221	7,257	964	11.7
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LA	218,729	211,224	7,505	3.4
EAST CARROLL PARISH, LA	3,025	2,636	389	12.9
EAST FELICIANA PARISH, LA	7,735	7,374	361	4.7
EVANGELINE PARISH, LA	12,166	11,559	607	5.0
FRANKLIN PARISH, LA	9,994	9,282	712	7.1
GRANT PARISH, LA	7,139	6,663	476	6.7
IBERVILLE PARISH, LA	13,270	12,461	809	6.1
JACKSON PARISH, LA	5,780	5,502	278	4.8
JEFFERSON PARISH, LA	233,326	224,826	8,500	3.6
LA SALLE PARISH, LA	5,343	5,056	287	5.4
LINCOLN PARISH, LA	20,093	19,597	496	2.5
MADISON PARISH, LA	5,611	5,140	471	8.4
MOREHOUSE PARISH, LA	12,045	10,863	1,182	9.8
NEW ORLEANS CITY/ORLEANS PARISH, LA	197,398	187,752	9,646	4.9
OUACHITA PARISH, LA	72,212	69,669	2,543	3.5
POINTE COUPEE PARISH, LA	9,770	9,157	613	6.3
RAPIDES PARISH, LA	62,285	59,519	2,766	4.4
RICHLAND PARISH, LA	8,358	7,643	715	8.6
ST BERNARD PARISH, LA	31,275	29,761	1,514	4.8
ST CHARLES PARISH, LA	22,922	21,817	1,105	4.8
ST HELENA PARISH, LA	4,008	3,814	194	4.8
ST JAMES PARISH, LA	9,126	8,285	841	9.2
ST JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, LA	19,395	18,131	1,264	6.5
ST LANDRY PARISH, LA	32,492	30,218	2,274	7.0
TANGIPAHOA PARISH, LA	44,800	41,848	2,952	6.6
TENSAS PARISH, LA	3,120	2,888	232	7.4
UNION PARISH, LA	12,848	12,314	534	4.2
WASHINGTON PARISH, LA	16,683	15,681	1,002	6.0
WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LA	10,514	10,084	430	4.1

WEST CARROLL PARISH, LA	5,363	4,689	674	12.6
WEST FELICIANA PARISH, LA	3,720	3,562	158	4.2
WINN PARISH, LA	6,435	6,091	344	5.3
MISSISSIPPI	1,304,172	1,233,887	70,285	5.4
ADAMS COUNTY, MS	14,411	13,287	1,124	7.8
AMITE COUNTY, MS	5,929	5,646	283	4.8
ATTALA COUNTY, MS	7,965	7,288	677	8.5
BENTON COUNTY, MS	3,435	3,223	212	6.2
BOLIVAR COUNTY, MS	16,979	15,644	1,335	7.9
CARROLL COUNTY, MS	4,454	4,183	271	6.1
CLAIBORNE COUNTY, MS	3,362	2,979	383	11.4
COAHOMA COUNTY, MS	11,805	10,704	1,101	9.3
COPIAH COUNTY, MS	11,251	10,342	909	8.1
COVINGTON COUNTY, MS	8,284	7,793	491	5.9
GRENADA COUNTY, MS	10,309	9,693	616	6.0
HOLMES COUNTY, MS	7,281	5,809	1,472	20.2
HUMPHREYS COUNTY, MS	4,764	4,269	495	10.4
ISSAQUENA COUNTY, MS	637	535	102	16.0
JEFFERSON COUNTY, MS	2,775	2,252	523	18.8
JEFFERSON DAVIS COUNTY, MS	5,028	4,139	889	17.7
LAFAYETTE COUNTY, MS	18,193	17,850	343	1.9
LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS	5,464	4,915	549	10.0
LEFLORE COUNTY, MS	15,670	14,123	1,547	9.9
LINCOLN COUNTY, MS	14,291	13,566	725	5.1
MARION COUNTY, MS	10,809	10,164	645	6.0
MARSHALL COUNTY, MS	14,560	13,765	795	5.5
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MS	5,559	5,217	342	6.2
PANOLA COUNTY, MS	12,627	11,567	1,060	8.4
PIKE COUNTY, MS	17,595	16,548	1,047	6.0
QUITMAN COUNTY, MS	3,319	3,011	308	9.3
RANKIN COUNTY, MS	61,561	60,109	1,452	2.4
SHARKEY COUNTY, MS	2,401	2,053	348	14.5
SIMPSON COUNTY, MS	10,118	9,617	501	5.0
SUNFLOWER COUNTY, MS	10,997	9,812	1,185	10.8



TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, MS	5,242	4,694	548	10.5
TATE COUNTY, MS	10,264	9,605	659	6.4
TIPPAH COUNTY, MS	10,651	10,094	557	5.2
UNION COUNTY, MS	12,581	12,085	496	3.9
WALTHALL COUNTY, MS	6,300	5,854	446	7.1
WARREN COUNTY, MS	26,450	25,150	1,300	4.9
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MS	26,585	24,089	2,496	9.4
WILKINSON COUNTY, MS	2,929	2,556	373	12.7
YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MS	4,601	4,253	348	7.6
YAZOO COUNTY, MS	9,647	8,815	832	8.6
MISSOURI	2,903,992	2,823,328	80,664	2.8
BOLLINGER COUNTY, MO	5,423	5,227	196	3.6
BUTLER COUNTY, MO	19,829	19,088	741	3.7
CAPE GIRARDEAU COUNTY, MO	38,320	37,416	904	2.4
CARTER COUNTY, MO	2,762	2,650	112	4.1
CRAWFORD COUNTY, MO	9,618	9,195	423	4.4
DENT COUNTY, MO	6,066	5,769	297	4.9
DOUGLAS COUNTY, MO	5,546	5,306	240	4.3
DUNKLIN COUNTY, MO	13,954	13,403	551	3.9
HOWELL COUNTY, MO	17,732	17,175	557	3.1
IRON COUNTY, MO	4,152	3,893	259	6.2
MADISON COUNTY, MO	4,360	4,138	222	5.1
MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, MO	6,098	5,848	250	4.1
NEW MADRID COUNTY, MO	8,967	8,587	380	4.2
OREGON COUNTY, MO	4,438	4,304	134	3.0
OZARK COUNTY, MO	4,077	3,926	151	3.7
PEMISCOT COUNTY, MO	8,338	7,886	452	5.4
PERRY COUNTY, MO	10,803	10,607	196	1.8
PHELPS COUNTY, MO	20,020	19,568	452	2.3
REYNOLDS COUNTY, MO	3,236	3,078	158	4.9
RIPLEY COUNTY, MO	5,395	5,187	208	3.9
STE. GENEVIEVE COUNTY, MO	8,726	8,472	254	2.9
ST FRANCOIS COUNTY, MO	24,568	23,252	1,316	5.4
SCOTT COUNTY, MO	20,826	20,086	740	3.6

SHANNON COUNTY, MO	4,036	3,870	166	4.1
STODDARD COUNTY, MO	13,207	12,709	498	3.8
TEXAS COUNTY, MO	8,583	7,963	620	7.2
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MO	9,405	8,843	562	6.0
WAYNE COUNTY, MO	3,491	3,264	227	6.5
WRIGHT COUNTY, MO	7,458	7,138	320	4.3
TENNESSEE	2,831,105	2,726,677	104,428	3.7
BENTON COUNTY, TN	7,663	7,051	612	8.0
CARROLL COUNTY, TN	12,266	10,987	1,279	10.4
CHESTER COUNTY, TN	8,379	8,044	335	4.0
CROCKETT COUNTY, TN	7,146	6,799	347	4.9
DECATUR COUNTY, TN	5,740	5,391	349	6.1
DYER COUNTY, TN	18,450	17,491	959	5.2
FAYETTE COUNTY, TN	14,466	13,911	555	3.8
GIBSON COUNTY, TN	21,975	20,702	1,273	5.8
GREENE COUNTY, TN	34,268	32,496	1,772	5.2
HARDEMAN COUNTY, TN	9,296	8,621	675	7.3
HARDIN COUNTY, TN	11,954	11,231	723	6.0
HAYWOOD COUNTY, TN	8,940	8,292	648	7.2
HENDERSON COUNTY, TN	13,910	13,168	742	5.3
HENRY COUNTY, TN	14,671	13,893	778	5.3
LAKE COUNTY, TN	2,526	2,400	126	5.0
LAUDERDALE COUNTY, TN	10,221	9,504	717	7.0
MC NAIRY COUNTY, TN	12,188	11,699	489	4.0
OBION COUNTY, TN	15,653	14,902	751	4.8
SHELBY COUNTY, TN	453,998	437,713	16,285	3.6
TIPTON COUNTY, TN	22,723	21,960	763	3.4
WEAKLEY COUNTY, TN	16,576	15,757	819	4.9
<b><u>OVERALL REGIONAL TOTAL</u></b>				<b>4.7</b>
Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics				
Bureau of Labor Statistics				
U. S. Department of Labor				
September 18, 2000				

Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative  
**Delta Tourism Development Forum**  
October 18-20, 2000, Memphis, Tennessee

**Welcoming Remarks**  
**By Rodney E. Slater, U.S. Secretary of Transportation**

On behalf of President Clinton and Vice President Gore, I am delighted to officially welcome you to this important forum. And once again, I thank all of you for participating. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Housing & Urban Development and Interior -- as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) -- for all the hard work that went into making this event possible.

Today, at the dawn of this new century and new millennium a powerful idea and a resolute commitment are working together for good for those who love the Mississippi Delta and believe in its future.

The powerful idea is the focal point of this forum: The Delta should use travel and tourism as a premier strategy for regional growth. The resolute commitment is that of the nation, as expressed by President Clinton and Vice President Gore, to extending the circle of prosperity to every byway and wetland of the Delta across seven states.

The President's promise to help the Delta goes back more than a decade, to his work as chairman of the Lower Mississippi Delta Commission. By starting the Delta Regional Initiative in 1998, he and Vice President Gore reaffirmed this promise. As the President has said, "We are committed to continuing work on this initiative<sup>1/4</sup>to ensure that people throughout the region can participate fairly and fully in the unprecedented prosperity our Nation enjoys today."

The Vice President strongly supports the President's commitment to sharing America's bounty with the Delta. "Poverty in the Delta remains at unacceptably high levels<sup>1/4</sup>We can do better. We have to do better-- and we will do better..."

That is why we are here in Memphis, some 160 strong, representing both the public and private sectors. We are here to help fulfill the President's promise for a better life for the Delta by establishing a region-wide strategy to promote economic development through tourism.

**PROGRESS REPORT ON DELTA INITIATIVE**

But first, as Chairman of the Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative, I would like to give you a progress report on what's happened to our Delta Initiative proposals pending before Congress as both houses move toward adjournment.

Last week the U.S. Senate included some \$20 million in the fiscal year 2001 budget for the Delta Regional Authority -- and we anticipate favorable action in the House of Representatives as well.

The President's budget had included requests for an additional \$159 million in targeted funding for Delta projects; this is over and above the amounts that would normally go to the Delta. The prospects look good for some \$7 million in rural development projects administered by USDA and \$8 million for DHEW health centers, to be paid for by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The outlook for other portions of the President's proposal is less certain.

Both House and Senate have appropriated almost \$231 million for 39 DOT Delta Initiative projects. This includes \$100 million for the U.S. Highway 82 Bridge over the Mississippi River at Greenville.

Congress has also approved \$94 million for the I-49 segment running through Arkansas from Texarkana to the Louisiana border. While I-49 is not part of the Delta proper, this major transportation artery will significantly improve market access via connecting routes that do run through the Delta.

The President's New Markets legislation -- which offers tax incentives and other inducements to encourage business development in low-income areas throughout the country -- has passed the House. If the Senate takes action before Congress adjourns, the New Markets bill could become law this year. While this legislation applies to the entire country, the Delta would be a major beneficiary.

We've come a long way since last May's historic Delta Vision, Delta Voices conference in Arlington, Virginia. You will shortly receive a letter providing a more complete update on our accomplishments, including the "Delta Circuit Rider" technical assistance project and the MentorNet program, which addresses the issue of the "digital divide."

## **WHY TOURISM?**

The most recent accomplishment I would like to mention, was organizing this Forum on Delta Tourism. Tourism is a 'natural' for this region. Like President Clinton, I am a son of Arkansas. And like the president, "I have traveled the beautiful valleys, wetlands, and other natural splendors of the Delta for much of my life." The Delta is a treasure of American history and natural beauty. Its unique culture has helped shape the growth of the nation. In other words, the Delta is just the kind of place that the world wants to visit.

Focusing on travel and tourism makes sense. Tourism is not only the world's largest industry; it is one of the fastest growing. Here in the United States, tourism employs more than 16 million people and generates nearly half a trillion dollars in

business. We estimate the Delta's share at about \$13 billion annually. So there is a lot of room for improving our revenue share. One of our goals this week is to develop a strategy that significantly increases that amount.

As incomes rise, people can afford longer vacations or they are willing to travel greater distances to find exactly what they want. As the American population ages, many older Americans enjoy using retirement as an opportunity to visit old haunts and new places. Half of the 850 million American and Canadian passengers who travel between cities by bus today are over 55.

As we evaluate marketing directed toward new categories of potential tourists, we should "think outside the box" and consider, for example, the travel interests and needs of the 40 million Americans with disabilities who might want to visit our region.

## **TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM**

By far the biggest force promoting tourism worldwide is globalization -- which President Clinton has called (with good reason) "The central reality of our time." The world economy today is 15 times what it was 40 years ago. As trade and communication between nations has expanded and living standards increased, so has the desire to travel.

There is a direct connection between the travel and tourism industry and transportation. Without transportation, there can be no travel. The reason that all too many communities in the Delta are "left behind," is that they are not connected to the great arteries of commerce -- the roads, the river ports, the railroads and the airports that move travelers and tourists to and from their destinations.

That is what transportation is all about -- it is the tie that binds people and communities together. And that is why transportation is a central theme of President Clinton and Vice President Gore's efforts to extend America's record-level prosperity to communities that have been left behind, by forging links between these communities and a wider world.

The Delta is not the only region seeking to speed growth by promoting tourism. During the past week I have either hosted or attended three major international transportation meetings where travel and tourism was as a significant topic.

Last week in Washington, D.C., I hosted an historic International Transportation Symposium that drew a thousand participants from some 90 countries to develop a shared vision of the future of transportation. The symposium devoted an entire panel session to the subject of Heritage and Cultural Tourism.

On Friday I met with the transportation ministers of the Western Hemisphere. Our focus was on establishing a regional Partnership for Safer Skies. Our prime concern was safety, of course. Safety remains President Clinton and Vice President Gore's top transportation priority and the "North Star" guiding all that we do at the U.S. Department of Transportation. But we were also driven by the knowledge that a perceived lack of

aviation safety in Latin America could dash regional hopes for expanded travel and tourism.

Finally, this past Monday I participated in the U.S.-China Aviation Symposium, where the focus on improving China's civil aviation system was driven, in part, by China's desire to expand tourism, which is already a major industry for them.

One reason Latin America and China consider travel and tourism, as an engine for growth, is that this industry makes full use of the existing historic, scenic and cultural heritage that is already available. China needs no new capital investment to create The Great Wall.

Another reason for exploring the tourist option is that tourism is a labor-intensive industry. However, I would emphasize that a "tourism for growth" strategy need not be limited to employment opportunities exclusively at the entry level. Creating, operating and maintaining the transportation, hotel, and other infrastructure needed to support tourism, will create jobs from the mailroom to the boardroom.

What makes sense for developing countries overseas makes sense for a developing region right here in America. Our focus on the potential of travel and tourism to expand the Delta's economy is not only a good idea; it is part of a major global trend.

## **PARTNERSHIP -- THE KEY TO SUCCESS**

To take maximum advantage of this trend, we require a new, higher level of partnership among all the principle players, including between government and the private sector. That is one of the reasons I am so grateful for the support the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and Chamber of Commerce have given to this event.

What we needed was a framework that would support a wide-ranging discussion of our options with participation by key stakeholders at all levels: government (at the federal, state and local level), industry, trade associations, and organized labor as well as consumers and interest groups.

That is why we chose to call this gathering a "forum" -- a place for an open discussion to explore new approaches.

In terms of new approaches, you are in for a treat tomorrow morning, with a presentation by Congressman Harold Ford of his "Vision for Tourism in the Delta." Congressman Ford is a true son of the Delta whose pragmatic and determined style has earned him considerable praise, both here and in Washington. As one of the first to cosponsor legislation to create the Delta Regional Authority, he has a proven track record of commitment to the future of this region.

In a few moments Al Eisenberg and Leslie Doggett will give you an overview of the Delta Initiative and “marching orders” for this Forum. You have been promised that this forum will be an intensive work session. We plan to keep that promise.

The course ahead will be difficult, but in terms of the future of our region, the rewards will exceed what we dare to imagine.

So, it’s time to get ready: In the words of the prophet Isaiah, “Widen the space of your tent; stretch out your hangings freely; lengthen your ropes; make your tent pegs firm -- for you will burst out to the right and to the left.”

## REPORT ON DELTA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Memphis, Tennessee, October 18-20, 2001

### **Executive Summary of Findings**

A total of 134 stakeholders from the public and private sectors from each of the seven Delta states attended the Delta Tourism Development Forum. These stakeholders included state tourism directors, economic development district administrators, tourism attraction operators, educators, and local, state, and federal government officials.

After considering remarks from several experts in tourism development, the participants divided into four working groups that generated inventories of the region's assets and needs. The groups also designed visions for tourism development in the region, as well as strategies and action steps to achieve those visions. An inventory of all of these findings is attached.

Before the Forum adjourned, the groups had a chance to meet together to discuss their findings. The participants were asked to prioritize their findings. Below the results of these large-group discussions, as well as a survey of the transcripts from the individual group sessions, are synthesized and summarized.

### **Assets**

The most significant assets that the group identified can be divided into four main categories:

- 1) Culture, Heritage, and History
- 2) Natural Resources
- 3) People and Southern Hospitality
- 4) Outdoor and Indoor Recreation Opportunities

Within the individual group inventories, subcategories for each of these main categories emerged:

- 1) Culture, Heritage, and History
  - a. Music--Jazz, Blues, Rock 'n Roll
  - b. Food
  - c. Literature
  - d. Historic Sites
  - e. Civil War/ Revolutionary War
  - f. Native Americans
  - g. African Americans
- 2) Natural Resources
  - a. Agriculture
  - b. River
  - c. Trails



- d. Parks
- e. Wildlife
- f. Aquaculture
- 3) People and Southern Hospitality
  - a. Human Resources
  - b. Volunteer Force
  - c. Diversity
- 4) Outdoor and Indoor Recreation Opportunities
  - a. Festivals
  - b. Theme Parks
  - c. Jazz Lands
  - d. Museums
  - e. Cities
  - f. Sports
  - g. Gambling
  - h. Fishing
  - i. Hunting
  - j. Bird Watching

## **Needs**

The most significant needs that the group identified can be divided into five main categories:

- 1) Transportation Infrastructure
- 2) Workforce Education and Development
- 3) Tourism Indicators and Research
- 4) Better Marketing
- 5) Leadership

These five main categories of needs have the following subcategories:

- 1) Transportation Infrastructure
  - a. River views and access, including cross-river access
  - b. Roads
  - c. Bridges
  - d. Rail
  - e. Airports
- 2) Workforce Education and Development
  - a. Qualified workers
  - b. Education
  - c. Young leadership
  - d. Keep young people in the region
- 3) Tourism Indicators and Research
  - a. Rural and Urban
  - b. Use of University Experts

- 4) Better Marketing
  - a. Signage
  - b. Packaging
  - c. Branding
- 5) Leadership
  - a. Unified
  - b. Local
  - c. Broad-based and diverse
  - d. Political
  - e. Streamline
  - f. Create entity to carry out Mississippi Delta Initiative

## **Visions**

The group widely agreed upon four major, guiding visions:

- 1) The region must create a borderless environment, so that the Delta has a common identity and can work together.
- 2) Delta residents are the first tourists and assets of the region, but the area also has worldwide appeal.
- 3) Tourism should be a major force in economic and workforce development in the Delta region.
- 4) Leadership is essential.

## **Strategies**

The most significant strategies that the group identified can be divided into six main categories:

- 1) Brand and Package
- 2) Include Tourism and Business as Part of Transportation Infrastructure Planning Process
- 3) Develop Regional Tourism Indicators and Research
- 4) Educate the Appropriate Groups
- 5) Obtain Funding and Technical Assistance for Grants
- 6) Establish Permanent Working Group Chartered by the Seven Delta States

These six main categories have the following subcategories:

- 1) Brand and Package
  - a. Coordinate/network regional events
  - b. Remove Delta "boundaries" and cross-sell
  - c. Regional website
  - d. Regional brochure

- 2) Include Tourism and Business as Part of Transportation Infrastructure Planning Process
  - a. Inclusive, comprehensive and sustainable planning process
  - b. Reconvene the Delta Transportation Consortium
- 3) Develop Regional Tourism Indicators and Research
  - a. User-Friendly Data
  - b. Rural and Urban Data
  - c. Distribute Data
- 4) Educate the Appropriate Groups
  - a. Educate Political Leaders on Tourism
  - b. Educate Community and Region on Local Assets and Importance as an Economic Source
  - c. Educate the Tourism Industry on Cross-Selling
- 5) Obtain Funding and Technical Assistance for Grants
  - a. Seek Out Non-Traditional Sources of Funding
  - b. Gain Private Sector Support
- 6) Establish Permanent Working Group Chartered by the Seven Delta States
  - a. Utilize the Delta Regional Authority
  - b. Single Point of Contact for Each State
  - c. Create and Carry Out a Plan
  - d. Obtain a Statement of Commitment from States to Support Tourism as Vital Industry

January 8, 2001  
UPDATE ON THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGIONAL  
INITIATIVE

**(The following is the text of a letter from Secretary Rodney Slater of the Department of Transportation, mailed to all 900 participants in the *Delta Vision, Delta Voices* conference of May, 2000, updating work on the Delta initiative.)**

On behalf of the Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative, I would like to extend our deep appreciation for your commitment to our collective vision for the region. The Delta Initiative is based upon a coalition of federal, state, and local government groups, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, grassroots leaders, and business leaders. Under the leadership of President Clinton and Vice President Gore, I believe that the Delta Initiative has made extraordinary progress, especially over the past few months. Together, we can make the vision of prosperity and opportunity a reality for this region.

As the Chairman of the Delta Initiative, I am honored to give you an update of our accomplishments since the *Delta Vision, Delta Voices* conference held in May 2000, in Arlington, Virginia. The Report that I presented to President Clinton at that time was powerfully influenced by the ideas and suggestions we gathered at our many listening sessions in the region during the last couple of years. On a wide array of issues, our efforts are turning into progress for the region. Here is a brief update on several of our accomplishments:

- **NEW MARKETS LEGISLATION**—As the President discussed in his New Markets tours through the Delta region in 1999, this legislation creates tax incentives and other assistance necessary to encourage business development in low-income areas throughout the country. Although national in scope, the Delta Region will be one of the bill's major beneficiaries. The legislation passed the Congress in its final hours as part of an omnibus appropriations bill and has become law.

**DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY**—The Congress enacted the Delta Regional Authority providing a two-year authorization for the program and appropriating \$20 million for the current fiscal year. This action realizes a long-term goal for the region. The legislation concentrates funding on the poorest localities and directs the bulk of the funds to transportation and infrastructure facilities. The Congress has approved \$20 million for FY 2001 for the Delta Regional Authority, authorized December 21, 2000.

- **TARGETED DELTA FUNDING**—For the current fiscal year the President's budget included requests for \$159 million in funding targeted for the region, *over and above the amounts that would normally go there*. The Federal Government has been devoting significant sums to the region already, but we have worked

steadfastly to inform Congress about the great need for this additional funding. The Congress has approved some of the funding requests—for example, \$4 million in additional US Department of Agriculture funding for rural development projects. Unfortunately, other funding requests for health care centers, education and housing did not pass the Congress.

An important part of the funding legislation the President, the Vice President and I have been supporting is a request for additional transportation funding for vital projects in the region under the transportation appropriations bill for FY 2001. The Congress approved \$231 million for a wide range of transportation projects throughout the Delta region.

- **DELTA CIRCUIT RIDER**—The President announced this project in West Memphis, Arkansas in December, 1999, and it is now in effect. Under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program, the Circuit Rider project will bring federal agencies and departments together to provide technical assistance for the poorest and smallest communities of the 42 counties of the Arkansas Delta. We intend that this model will be expanded into all Delta states.
- **MENTORNET**—The Department of Transportation is participating in bringing the "MentorNet" program to the Delta, providing 65 mentors in four newly enlisted colleges (Philander Smith College in Little Rock; LeMoyne Owen College in Memphis; the University of Central Arkansas; and Jackson State University), with \$150,000 in funding. MentorNet is an Internet-based mentoring program through which business and government executives help college students develop careers in math, sciences, engineering, and computer sciences. DOT is the first federal agency to join in this nationwide program.
- **LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE DELTA**—In keeping with the fundamental principle of listening closely to the grassroots voices, federal leaders of the Initiative continues to take part in listening sessions in the Delta. Recent examples include:
  - Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group in Memphis on August 8, 2000.
  - Secretary of Education Richard Riley's "Success Express" back-to-school education tour at 20 sites in all seven states, from August 28-31.
- **DELTA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM**—As announced by Vice President Gore during the May 2000 conference, the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, the Interior, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development, along with the Delta states' tourism offices, co-hosted the Mississippi Delta Region Tourism Development Initiative Fall Forum, October 18-20, 2000, in Memphis, Tennessee. Building upon the many tourism development activities already under way in the Delta Region, the Tourism Development Forum brought together a wide range of public and private stakeholders, including state tourism officials, tourism business leaders, local officials, tour operators, national

park officials, and other leaders in the tourism industry to develop an enhanced regional tourism marketing strategy. This strategy will form the basis for a larger gathering of Delta tourism stakeholders next year to outline the specific shared responsibilities of the public and private parties necessary to attain the objective of heightened tourism travel to the region.

As these summaries demonstrate, we have made great progress for the Delta. In addition to these updates, you may wish to access the U.S. Department of Transportation Delta Website at <http://www.dot.gov/delta>. It provides information that has been included since the *Delta Vision, Delta Voices* conference. Through the website and other forums, we will continue to keep you informed about our accomplishments.

We recognize that there is still a great deal of work to be done in the Delta, and we will continue to press on with our various activities. Most importantly, we will remain vigilant, and keep your vision and your voice ever in our minds, as we strive to promote prosperity and opportunity in the great Mississippi Delta region that lies at the heart of America.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Rodney E. Slater